# Carolina Representative Doubts $98-Year Income

Daily World — Atlanta, Ga
Wed. 6-19-46

BY LOUIS LAUTIER
For the NNPA News Service

WASHINGTON.—Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, president of Howard University, and Representative Butler B. Hare, Democrat, of South Carolina, debated the economic plight of southern tenant farmers during hearings on Howard appropriations, recently released hearings on the Labor-Federal Security appropriation bill for 1947 disclosed.

6-19-46

The wordy tilt came as Mr. Hare, chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee on Labor-Federal Security appropriations, fenced with Dr. Johnson over the need of the South in particular for colored physicians.

Mr. Hare disputed that the ratio of physicians to the population had any relation to the demand. His position, contrary to that of Dr. Johnson, was that the demand determined the need.

### ABILITY TO PAY

Dr. Johnson got his opening when Representative Albert J. Engel, Republican, of Michigan, interrupted the colloquy between Mr. Hare and Dr. Johnson to say that he did not believe the need for physicians could be based upon the demand because "the demand is often governed by the ability to pay."

Agreeing with Mr. Engel, Dr. Johnson declared:

"In that respect before this war, I am advised that there were 3,000,000 Negroes living in the Southern states who had an annual net cash income, wherever they did have any cash income at all, not exceeding $98 a year.

"Investigators have shown that all but invariably they owed this $98 at the general store for fat meat, corn bread, and molasses that they had eaten last winter. Now, human beings like that simply have no margin for medical service."

"Let me state here that I do not accept that statement," Mr. Hare flared back. "I do not want to argue with you, but I do not accept that statement as correct, that they had an income of only $98 and owed that to the store, because if your statement were correct nobody would credit them in the first place, and in the second place, there was very little fat meat and molasses available this last year in my state, for either white or black.

Wed. 6-19-46

"I agree with you that the income is low, the income is too low and the income ought to be larger, but your statement for the record is perfectly absurd."

### WHITES IN CATEGORY

"Mr. Chairman," replied Dr. Johnson, "your remark, I believe, focuses upon the essential matter, namely that the income is too low. When we look into that question, we shall find that we have not only three million Negroes, but about five and one-half million whites in the South who are almost in that same category."

"I do not have to look into it, Doctor, because I live with them every day, and I have lived with them for seventy years," shot back Mr. Hare.

6-19-46

"I know their income has always been low, but I know it has been increased wonderfully and marvelously in the last quarter of a century," he added.

"And I know because, as I say, I live with them and see them every day, and I know what their incomes are. And to say that the average income of a large number of them is only $98 a year is perfectly absurd."

Wednesday

"I am sure that the chairman is correct in noting that great improvements have been made in the area under his observation," replied Dr. Johnson. "My statement was drawn from scientific studies made before the war, and I could quote them exactly if the chairman cared to have me do so."

"Those quoted statements will not amount to a tinker's rattler to me, because what I say I know, and what I say I know I know, I know I know it," said Mr Hare "and statements from any other source to me would not register."

# Earl Conrad

Defender
Chicago, Ill.
Sat. 8-24-46

## Questions of Migration

ATLANTA, GA.—Frank McCallister, a labor leader for the state of Georgia this week gave me a report that may well answer the question whether Negroes should migrate from the cotton areas of the South to the North.

The tall, energetic labor man, speaking at his office in this city put it this way: "It isn't a matter of whether one is for or against migration. It is going to take place anyway just as soon as the mechanical cotton picker and the flame thrower are placed into operation in the cotton fields. That is no more than two or three years away. Factories engaged in reconversion manufacture are now turning out these implements and within a short time they will be in wide use in most Southern states. They are in use in Mississippi now.

"When these instruments begin to displace the Negro in labor in the fields it will mean something like an industrial revolution. It will drive these workers either to the urban centers of the South or northward. Most of them will try to go North. Those that come to the Southern urban centers will be a competitive force with organized labor.

## Nothing Being Done

"RIGHT NOW nothing is being done to handle this expected problem. There is a National Planning Commission whose job is to look into this question but it hasn't got going as yet. But migration is occurring now, and it will occur on a great scale within the next two or three years."

That is an interesting report. People have been talking about the coming industrial revolution in the South for many years. Apparently the war delayed its appearance. McCallister says it is here now.

The labor leader is aware of the debate that has been going on in the recent period in the Negro press over this question. He contends that debate over a living issue is an academic point, that life itself will presently give us the answer and he says we ought to prepare for it.

Who is going to take care of these extra millions who will come out of the South?

I don't know but I am inclined to agree with this labor man that we will in the near future have to face the question of how to resettle a large new mass of Negro migrants in the North. It will be the function of the organizations like the Urban League, the Negro press, the NAACP, the labor movement and the other white allies. Actually pressure ought to be placed upon federal government to prepare for this emergency, to speedily act or else have its present enormous housing problem immensely aggravated.

It is no longer a question whether it is desirable for Negroes to come North or to stay South and fight or to come North to increase the voting bloc. If, during the next two or three years several million Negroes are displaced there will be no alternative for them but to get out. Can one expect the planters, farmers, bankers, industrialists of the South to take care of a few million extra Negro unemployed? They've never cared before and I think they will welcome it now as a means of smashing organized labor in the South and re-establishing the wage-differential in the areas where labor has now eliminated it.

## Surplus Labor

IT HAS been the history of the rise of American capitalism that every time a new invention has displaced a body of workers capital has actually benefited thereby. This creates a reservoir of surplus labor to be used against the organized worker and to reduce wages of others. As soon as Northern and Southern capital realize this they will make haste to install this machinery throughout the South.

Northern and Southern white labor need to face this problem now. They need to know that this industrialized cotton economy will affect the economy of the whole country, the wage and living conditions of all. If this thing is unattended it can produce the next depression. It could be used to convince the North that there must be a great federal housing program which will both shelter and employ people. Another result of this development will be the complete colonization of the South and the complete monopolization of Southern economy by Northern finance capital. White liberals in the South should learn from this to make cause with all forces of progress in the North.

## The Story Behind The Story

Louisiania Weekly
Sat 8-31-46

REVELATION of the "feud" among two white families over the services of Negro sharecropping families as the reason for the exciting two-day shooting disturbance no doubt surprised and relieved many living in this Southland, where race relations are becoming more strained and tense because the Federal Government and the "good" white people of the South seem helpless to maintain any semblance of justice, law and order. New Orleans La.

According to reports, the bloody battle of Sullivan's Hollow, in which four white men and one Negro were wounded, "was the result of a smoldering feud between white families of that section." The shooting was done by the whites and not by the Negroes as first reported. The basis for the feud appears to have been the scarcity of Negro help. For during the war one of the feuding families attempted to hire one of the Negro families employed by the other feuding family at higher wages.

If the latest information revealed is true of the shooting disorder and subsequent "manhunt," there is reason to believe that there is a story behind the story.

The story behind the story is "Migration from the Southern rural areas." This migration which undoubtedly caused the shortage of help has been going on since World War I. It picked up greatly during World War II and promises to continue indefinitely. It will certainly continue indefinitely until there is a change in the South, especially in the rural areas of the South. This change will have to be industrialization, unionization of the South, and with more respect of justice, law and order by white people themselves, regardless to race, creed or color. Only by making the South more livable with respect to regarding the principles and concepts of the United States Constitution will the migration ever fully stop, if then.

The discussion of whether Negroes should leave the South or stay in the South and fight with progressive whites for democracy as it is preached to the world is being widely debated all over the country. The only people who are not debating the question are those Negroes who live in these rural areas of the Southland, where they have no rights and are virtual slaves under the guise of sharecropping. They are leaving the South as fast as they can. They have no time for debate. They know what conditions they are up against in the rural areas where "white supremacy" ideas hold forth quite oppressively and oftentimes violently. They can't even read, most of them, the advice of staying South or of the debate going on between columnists of their staying South. They know, just like the founding fathers of this country knew, they were being oppressed and unjustly treated. They left England because they saw little hope of staying and fighting. Our forefathers saw more hope in America. Likewise, the Negroes in the rural areas, where they are afforded no real protection by the law, local, state or federal, see hope above the Mason and Dixon line.

Sat 8-31-46

The usual pattern is one "escapes" from the virtual slavery of sharecropping, makes good and then sends for another member of the family after another until finally all have "migrated." Many who aren't migrating because of the lack of opportunities and oppressive conditions in the South are "passing." This fact was revealed recently in Collier's in an article by Herbert Asbury after a detailed study of the U. S. Census figures.

Unless the Federal Government and the people of the South who are sincerely interested in the progress of the South do something concrete soon to relieve the oppressive, brutal conditions under which its Negro citizens live with little economic, educational and recreational opportunities the endless migration will continue. There are signs that the South wants to do better despite the past few weeks of lynchings and mass murders. However, it must do better with an active program that brings results. The South must actually do better as well as want to do better.

## Stranded After Refusing Farm Job

Miss Elizabeth Brown of 115 12½ St., S.W., Roanoke, Va. left, and Miss Elizabeth Ramsey of Bluefield, Va., who found themselves stranded in Baltimore Thursday after hitch-hiking from Cedarville, N.J. where they said they found living accommodations on a farm where they had gone to work too unbearable. Both girls were given help by the Baltimore Travelers' Aid until their relatives sent funds for them to return home.

## Asked to Farm in Jersey, 4 Girls Start Hike to Va.

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md
Sat. 8-17-46

BALTIMORE

Fleeing from a farm in Cedarville, N.J., where they were hired to work in a "canning factory," four young women from Virginia began hitch-hiking home and found themselves stranded in Baltimore this week.

They were Miss Elizabeth Brown of Roanoke, and Mrs. Juanita B. Turpin, Misses Margaret Robinson and Elizabeth Ramsey, all of Bluefield, W.Va.

The group left home Monday for Cedarville, after being told of the cannery jobs by their local U.S. Employment Service offices.

**Found Selves on Farm**

The office, they report, gave them an employer's agreement, stating that sleeping accommodations, meals and housing would be furnished at reasonable rates, taken from their salary of 57½ cents an hour.

Upon their arrival in Cedarville, however, the girls said they found just the opposite.

The cannery was a farm with barracks about the size of an office desk; double-decker beds with no linen; no water, no lighting or laundry facilities; no cafeteria or eating place, and no indications of any amusement.

**Left Job Immediately**

They said, further, that the employer. John Minervini, white, gave the group, which consisted of 31 girls, two sandwiches and a glass of milk apiece, and led them to understand they were to pick tomatoes and corn.

Not waiting for further explanation, the young women started walking back home.

**Hitch-hike to Baltimore**

They were picked up in Bridgeton, N.J., by a friendly truck driver, who put them off at Baltimore Tuesday and gave them the price of a meal and night's lodging, they said.

Here, they contacted the Travelers' Aid, where officials obtained quarters for them at the YWCA, and supplied them with dinner, and meal tickets for breakfast.

Since then, three of the women were able to contact relatives; Miss Brown has gone home to Roanoke; and Mrs. Turpin and Miss Robinson are joining the former's husband in Bridgeport, Conn.

Miss Ramsey is still here awaiting further word from her brother in Bluefield.

**AFRO Checks Story**

Minervini's son, Michael, told the AFRO that the four women did not wait long enough to have their duties explained, and that the other girls who made the trip are among 75 others now employed as canners.

He admitted that the cabins are small, but said linens were supplied, and showers are in the process of completion.

He said, further, that all the terms of the contract are being observed. The town has a population of about 1000 people, he declared.

## Dixie Alarmed by Migration, Vote

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.

JACKSON, Miss (ANP) — Wartime migration from southern farms was reported last week to be shaking up the South's pre-Civil War farm economy, spearheaded by hordes of determined colored workers, who have forsaken the plantations for factory jobs with a vow never to return to agriculture.

## 3 Million Dixie Workers Are Again Coming North

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.
Sat. 7-13-46

A great lasting [illegible] for the social, economic and political to "white supremacy" because in rich Delta area in this state where the process is the many areas they outnumber whites. colored outnumber whites.

Stricken with fear, white men see the gradual breaking of the will begin to vote and will be running the government of counties social, economic and political and towns. Such domination, they chains that once bound colored hold, can be averted only by equal Southerners, considered a danger

**Fear Domination**

Soon, they say, colored people hard by their heavy migration to industries where war industries flourished. High industrial wages plus additional personal freedom have been the lure. During the war, the Delta area migratory colored workers are bad- never to return to their previous status.

On the other hand, whites considered farm workers are determined

Sat. 1-20-46

PHILADELPHIA.

With its best blood, colored and white, leaving by the millions for other sections of the country, the South is facing an industrial and political crisis which it can hardly afford, declares Walter Davenport, writing in the July 13 issue of Collier's Magazine.

"Dixie is scared because her youth is deserting her, leaving no one to do tomorrow's work" he says, and "is split into two camps —those yearning for the return of yesterday and those preparing for tomorrow."

While some workers are living on savings while waiting for new industrial jobs at war wages, most are working only as the need for money arises or are continuing the migration north, east and west.

**CIO Drive Hailed**

Citing the CIO drive as the force doing most to rebuild a new South, the author says that the emergency war worker has abandoned his distrust of labor unions and organizers, most of whom have been specially trained.

Although in Mississippi, Bilbo and Rankin were re-elected, partly on their promise to drive Sidney Hillman, the late CIO-PAC leader and a Jew, out of the country, the organizational drive has been highly successful, he adds.

"Even if a third of the 9,000,000 colored people who lived below the Mason-Dixon line before the war migrate," Mr. Davenport adds, "Dixie will have a nasty unemployment problem unless new small industry and expanded big industry absorb those who remain."

**Effect on Legislation**

Also significant, he says, is the increasing effect of the colored vote on legislation and legislators, particularly Federal, as more and more once all-white Democratic primaries are opened to colored citizens.

That Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Louisiana and the Carolinas especially are concerned over the migration is evident in officials' warnings that the States' industrial drive must be slowed down unless workers are induced to remain and migrants to return home.

Typical of the individual farmer's fear, according to Mr. Davenport, is an Alabama plantation owner's admission that the colored people are always leaving him and that he couldn't find replacements.

**GOP Optimism**

Yet, while he knew the exact number of head of cattle, he was unaware of the number of colored tenant farmers, a friend explaining, "We don't count 'n---rs' down here until we need 'em."

In addition, Mr. Davenport reveals that the organization of workers is creating optimism among Southern Republicans who see in it a "real two-party political setup" which can help eliminate much of the South's problem.

Finally, declaring that he is convinced that "Dixie has finally laid down the shovel and the hoe never to take them up again," he says, "Only in Tin Pan Alley will the cotton fields be melodious and only there will Dixie's banjos ring."

# Migrant Workers in Central Jersey

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.

# Faring Worse Than Farmers in Georgia

Sat. 8-24-46

## Packed Like Sardines in Old Shacks, They Yearn to Return to South but Lack Money to Go Back

CRANBURY—On April 2, 1945, Gov. Walter E. Edge signed into law a bill designed to regulate migratory labor in New Jersey and to promote better health and living conditions among out-of-state workers.

The bill, which was introduced by Assemblyman Gustav Huhn of Essex County, provided for appointment of a migrant labor board within the State Department of Labor and carried a $1000,000 appropriation.

**Comparable to Dixie**

But despite the law and despite the money set aside to put it into effect, last week I found conditions on the potato farms of Middlesex County comparable to any to be found in Talmadge's Georgia or in the Magnolia domain of Bilbo and Rankin.

Here are some examples:

The first is that of Mrs. Mary L. Smith, a native of Tifton, Ga., who has lived in this town since August of last year and who is one of the 10 workers on the farm owned and operated by H. W. and Alvin Updike, father and son.

**Mrs. Smith lives in a hut (formerly a chicken coop) with her mother, Mrs. Celia A. Oliver, who is 79 years old.**

The hut is a one-room affair about 12 by 16 feet, with makeshift windows, an ill-fitting wooden door, ceilings about six and a half feet high and with no insulation of any type.

Inside the place is a single cot, a wood-burning stove, box table and a broken down chair or two.

**25 Cents for Water**

Mrs. Smith, who worked at the Cranbury Poultry Company during the winter, said that she pays rent of $3 a week for this place and 25 cents a week for the privilege of getting water from a nearby house.

"The place is so leaky that when it rains everything is flooded," she said.

**She gets 10 cents a bag for picking potatoes (about a bushel) and some days makes as much as $2.50 or $3, but her highest weekly income is about $15 and sometimes as low as $1.70.**

Out of this she has to pay the rent, buy food for herself and her mother and pay a doctor's bill, since she has been ill for two or three weeks.

As she told her story she stood inside the stuffy little shack and cried and said she would go back to Georgia if she had bus fare for herself and her mother.

Her husband? Two weeks ago she said, he got into some trouble in Cranbury and was sent to the workhouse for a year.

**Six Men in Shack**

Near her is a similar shack which is occupied by six young men. From the outside it looks identical, but is more crowded and dirtier inside.

The young men are Albert, Lindsey, James and Buster Tanker, John Parker and George Smith, all natives of Virginia.

They live, cook, eat and sleep in a single room partially divided by boards running half way up the walls.

One of them is only 17, another is married and has a family to send money home to, but all of them are disgusted with the place, and want to get away as quickly as possible.

**"But we got to stay and get money enough to leave," they said.**

The buildings are located in the immediate vicinity of an old-fashioned outhouse, which even a blind man could locate in the dark.

I talked to the owners, the Updike family, and this is what they said:

1. "Six months ago we wrote to the Labor Department in Trenton asking information and aid to build better houses for the workers. To date we have received no answer.

2. 'If we got aid in building, the township zoning board would not give us permission to build because they think the workers would stay here the year around and they don't want any more colored here permanently.

3. 'And even if we could build, they (the workers) would simply tear the places down."

"The Updikes were of the opinion that the conditions were not too bad and wages high enough.

"We just want to live and let live," they said.

About 500 feet away is a frame house and 11 dilapidated trailers occupied by workers at the poultry company, which is owned by Michael Pack.

**Rooms, 12 Families**

Here 12 families live in seven rooms, and from one to three persons in the trailers. The one-room "apartments" rent for $2 a week and two rooms for $4. The trailers go for $2 weekly, too.

**Toilet facilities are in the rear, hemmed-in among the trailers, and all the families get water from a single faucet outside the building.**

About three-quarters of a mile from town is another settlement where more poultry plant employees live. Here there are 28 one-room movable barracks, put up by the company about 10 months ago.

Also there are an additional half dozen or so trailers, all as rundown and dilapidated as the first set.

A pump is the sole source of water. In the winter the buildings are heated by oil or wood stoves, which also are used for cooking.

Some of the houses have screer doors, supplied by the occupants, but all ar ewithout ceilings and insulation.

**No Fire Protection**

There is no fire protection, and it was in one of these houses where, six months ago, five members of a six-person family were burned to death when an oil stove exploded.

All of the persons with whom I talked said the houses are no good in summer and worse in the winter.

An almost original expression came from one young woman who said, "I don't like here fine."

A plant official, who asked that his identity not be revealed, hinted at the motive back of these deplorable living conditions.

He said that some of the farmers and the company would build better homes for the workers, especially those who remain the year around, but that the township officials—through the zoning board—will not permit construction of new houses for colored.

**The town's citizens, he said, do not want permanent colored neighbors and the company has been asked not to hire workers who have children, who are not wanted in the local schools.**

By not permitting construction six-year-old anti-crowding zoning of new homes and by enforcing a ordinance growth of the colored population is stymied, he reasoned.

**Wat Is Edge Doing?**

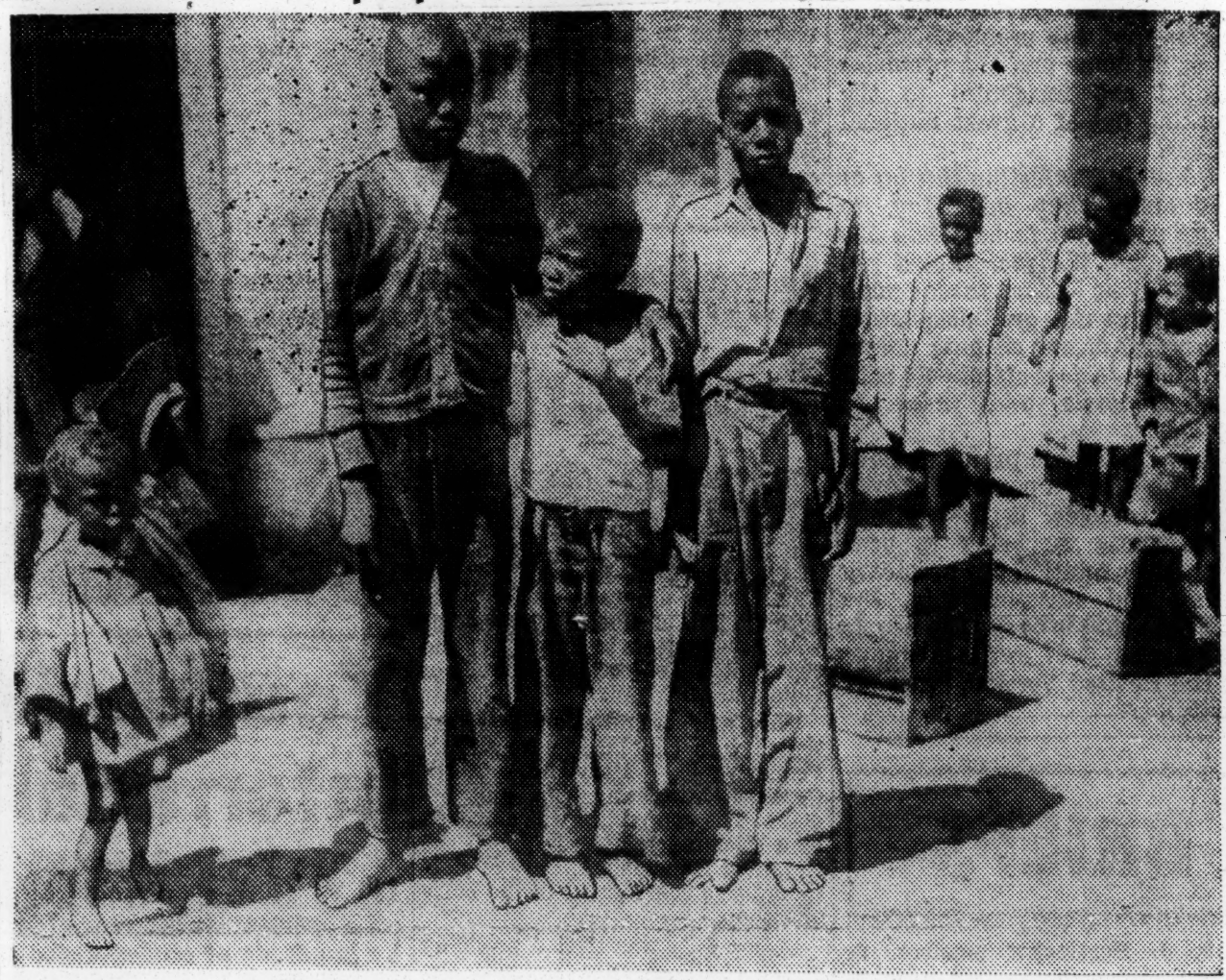
If this is true, and it seems quite plausible, the question is what is the Edge Administration doing to enforce the Migrant Labor Law passed in 1945? What is happening to Middlesex County's share of the $1000,000?

# Squalor of NY Farm Camps Recalls Worst Dixie Evils

**COULD NEW YORK BE LIKE THE RURAL SOUTH? New York, with a large population of underpaid, underprivileged farm workers living in shacks with outdoor privies and pumps? Children four and five years old working long hours in the fields under the prodding of an overseer? Impossible. Impossible in liberal, cosmopolitan New York!**

**That would be the answer of most people to even the idea that there has been trans-**

planted to this state some of the worst features of rural farm life in the most backward sections of the south. Yet the fact is that every year thousands of migrant farm workers—most of them Negroes—are brought from the deep South under shocking conditions to harvest fruits, peas, potatoes, beans and other products of New York farms. From 12,000 to 15,000 a year are imported to farm labor camps in upstate counties and on Long Island.



**Of Working Age?** **Boys like these children of migrant farm workers in New York work as much as ten hours a day picking fruits and vegetables at harvest time. The wooden boxes are their only toys—they make their own recreation.**

### NORTHERN "JOADS"

Last year the Consumers League of New York studied conditions in 65 of these camps to acquaint the public with working conditions in an effort to gain for the migrants the legal protection, benefits, and rights accorded industrial workers under our laws. The report just issued, titled "What Next for New York's Joads?" is a moving record of the pitiful plight of these farmers.

The story starts hundreds of miles away from New York, perhaps in Florida, where the "Joads" pick crops in the winter before coming North for the summer harvest. Usually a "contractor" lures them with promises of high pay—pay which turns out to be much less when the workers arrive at their destinations here.

With assurance of good pay and good living conditions, the pickers load in trucks or buses with their families for the trip to New York. Family groups are important, for the labor of the wives and children are essential to the livelihood of all. The 1800 mile trip by truck which most of the Negroes travel is described as a "nightmare."

### CROWDED LIKE CATTLE

It means four days and four nights of travel, tossed about in a truck, crowded like cattle. If it rains the riders are soaked. Seats in a truck at best are no luxury—and there is hardly enough sitting room on the narrow benches. The workers arrive with swollen feet, sore backs, spirits exhausted.

They land at their homes which consist usually of rows of attached frame shacks, with one room allotted to the average-size small family. The water supply for the camp comes from an outdoor faucet or pump. Washing of clothes is done in tin tubs outside the cabins, water is carried in buckets to the house. Toilets may be outdoor privies, not too clean. There may not be bathing facilities of any kind or screening of the homes, or adequate facilities for disposing of waste matter.

### HEALTH IMPERILLED

The camps vary. Of the sixty-five camps covered by the Consumers' League eight were completely new with shower houses, a community laundry with hot and cold running water, screened outhouses, electricity and recreation halls. Unfortunately these modern camps are not the characteristic ones, despite the fact that state laws require inspection of them by the Department of Health. An amendment to state law providing increased regulation for these camps failed to pass the State legislature last year.

### CHILDREN AT WORK

Perhaps the most vicious aspect of the migrants' camps is the common practice of using child labor. Children from four and five years of age up through the early teens work beside their parents in the field to add to the family income. The provisions of the state child labor law are obviously ignored, and may well be, since no inspection of the camps is regularly made for compliance with this law. To the employer of migrant labor it means just so many more hands—though small ones—to get in his harvest, and child labor is the customary thing on the farms.

The schooling of these children is naturally neglected. Spending one season in the South, another in the North, they are out of classes for the early fall, and again their school life is interrupted with the midwinter harvest in Florida. All New York communities do not welcome them into the local schools, and if they do go they are poorly adjusted during the six to eight weeks of their stay.

The many problems of the migrant farmers are those to be expected when temporary camps are maintained for low paid workers, without the strictest supervision of government agencies, and without a positive program for the welfare of the migrants. Wholesome recreation is scarcely available either in the camps or in the narrow-minded small rural communities nearby. Inadequate provision is made for health and medical care. Food is frequently obtained from a "commissary" where there is a considerable mark up for credit extended the migrants until they are paid at the end of the season.

### A PROGRAM NEEDED

The camps of migrant laborers are apparently here to stay for a while at least—since New York farms have always depended heavily on this labor. The question is whether their evils are here to stay. The Consumers' League recommends a program for their improvement involving enforcement of such existing laws as the Child labor law, the Fair Labor Standards Act, minimum wage law enforcement of the Sanitary Code, and enforcement of laws relating to conditions under which workers are transported from one state to the next. The use of CCC and prisoner of war camps—all superior to the migrants' camps—to house the workers is another proposal.

During the war there was much abuse of laxity in applying protective laws to these workers because of the wartime need for increased food production. Now that even that questionable excuse for exploitation has ended it is time for a fair deal for New York's transplanted farm workers.

## Mexican Labor May Be Withheld

WASHINGTON, D. C.—(NNPA)—The Government of Mexico has seriously affect sugar beet produc- would not permit its citizens to work in these states. Mexicans and Informed the United States that its Agriculture Clinton P. Anderson, unless it can guarantee that be discriminated against in the citizens will not Charging that Mexican Nationals country it will not were discriminated against in Col- furnish the additional 20,000 much ments in 1943. needed farm workers which this year has been refused to which the first agreement was to extend the contracts of the 20,000 workers already here and to add an additional 20,000 between the two governments made since

## DON'T GO BACK TO THE FARM

Montgomery Advertiser

During the war there was a quite natural tendency for population to shift from depressed farming areas toward the industrial centers where high wages beckoned. Fifty-six counties in Alabama have less people living in them today than before the war due to this migration.

Not all of population loss of those 56 counties was absorbed by the 11 counties which increased in population. A considerable proportion of the migrants went to industrial areas outside the state.

George L. Davis, FSA research information specialist, writing in the Alabama School Journal, points out that this decrease in population in farming areas did not result in a decrease in farm production. No definite figures are available for Alabama separate from the nation, but the Department of Agriculture estimates that American farmers produced one-fourth more with one-third less workers during the war years. It is a safe assumption that Alabama was not far from typical among the states making up that average picture. Mon 2-23-46

Agricultural leaders and economists have been warning returning veterans not to get involved in any "back to the farm" movement because of the obvious fact that without increase of present farm population far more food and other agricultural products can be produced than we can use. This will inevitably depress the price of farm products as the whole national economy returns once more to peacetime production.

Some of the population which left the farms during the war were excess population even before the war due to the simple fact that farm population was too dense in some areas to provide enough return from the land to support its people no matter what farming methods were used. Several areas in Alabama fell in that category. Montgomery, Ala.

A preliminary report of the Southeastern Region, USDA Post-War Planning committee for Alabama, quoted by Mr. Davis, discusses this problem as follows:

"Prior to the war there were many pressing economic problems faced by Southern agriculture, and which, if temporarily dormant, will rise again at the close of the war. Probably the most outstanding of these is the density of rural farm people. Alabama, for instance, has only an average of about five acres of harvested cropland per capita of rural farm population (which means a great many individuals have less) as compared with three to five times this in portions of the Midwest. The density of the population and the use of unprofitable methods have resulted in a low income for farm families."

Aside from the uneconomic concentration of population in many farming areas as judged by pre-war farming standards, there is a new factor being introduced by recent farm machinery developments.

Of course, the long awaited cotton picker is one of those important developments. It is now well out of the experimental stage and has been successfully operated in numbers for approximately two years. This machine is expensive but the price is expected to come down sharply as greater numbers are produced, and, as is inevitable, advantageously simplified.

Of similar importance is the flame cultivator which can be used to replace the hoe in cotton farming. This flame cultivator, invented by a Montgomerian, Price McLemore, was used during the war almost entirely for sugar-cane cultivation due to the pressing need for industrial alcohol. Now it is becoming available for general use on all row crops which have heavy stems. That provides the necessary other side of the picture to widespread use of the cotton picker. Prior to that remarkable development, there was little pressure behind the development of the cotton picker. As long as a large labor force had to be maintained to weed the cotton two or more times during the year, what was the use of a machine which would replace those hands only at harvest time?

Mon 2-25-46

The low income per farm family in Alabama can be raised by only two means. The first is better farming, and the second is by decreasing the number of farm families. There is an obvious limit to improvement in farming methods, a limit pushed forward each year by advancement in farm practices, it is true, but at the expense of replacing human beings with machines. That brings matter right back to the second method of increasing farm income per family.

The idea of setting up a definite program of enforced migration from the farms to industrial areas is abhorrent in the extreme. However, it is hoped that persuasion and a definite expansion of economic opportunities in industry will in some measure lead to the same result. As industrialization of the South advances, we will be given an opportunity to see whether the natural workings of our economy are sound enough, given a boost here and there by government, to accomplish the only sound solution to Alabama's agricultural problem.

## RALPH McGILL

# New York Moves To Correct a Failure

Atlanta Constitution

Atlanta, Ga.

Only a slight stir was caused in New York recently by an exposure that human greed and man's inhumanity to man is general and must be controlled by law. Man himself will not do it.

This slight stir involved visitors from the South.

Each year some 12,000 to 15,000 persons from the Deep South, largely Florida, but also from parts of Georgia and Alabama closest Florida, come to upper New York State to pick vegetables.

They work an average of 10 hours per day, but often the work is for as long as 15 and even 18 hours at the peak of the season for the particular vegetable being harvested.

Children, many of them as young as nine years, have been forced to work 10 and 12 hours per day and many have fainted from overwork in the sun, plus lack of sustaining food and resultant poor health.

They work under conditions very close to those of peonage. They are the migrant persons of whom John Steinbeck wrote in his book, "Grapes of Wrath." Mon 3-15-46

They have no real standing, being illiterate, migrant workers. They move from season to season and place to place. Their life is a hard one, enjoying little protection from the law or from society.

Gov. Tom Dewey, in signing a bill which does not at all protect them, but merely requires registration of any employer bringing 10 or more migrant workers into the state, said:

"New York does not wish to eat food harvested at the cost of human misery."

That brings up the question of what is the misery to which they have been subjected for so many years.

It was plentiful and shameful.

**Do-Gooders** Even more shameful is the fact it would have gone on had it not been for one of those do-good, or uplift organizations about which defenders of the statue-quo complain so much. We have these complainers in the South. If there is any attempt to clean up slums, give the Negro justice in courts or rescue any white and colored poor persons from exploitation—approximating peonage, there are always those who rage against "uplift" organizations. Indeed, the day after the Supreme Court of the United States ruled on the Negro vote case an indignant gentleman wrote in to say it was all the fault of one of those cursed uplift organizations.

Investigation by this uplift organization revealed that the workers are brought an average of not quite two thousand miles in open trucks. Some stayed wet for two days in rain. All sat for an average of four days and nights on plank seats. Women with babies simply held them on their laps for the whole journey. Many reported to this do-good investigation that their feet often remained swollen for days following such a journey.

Further investigation revealed three and four families crowded into small shacks; piles of hay for beds, no bathing facilities, privies foul and infested with maggots.

It also was found that the State Labor Department did nothing about the working of the children, below the ages of 12 years.

Farm owners demanded the whole family work or not eat. Other threats were: "Keep working or go back where you came from."

The company-store plan, notorious in the South, works in New York as in the South. High prices, padding of debts and other evils match anything revealed anywhere else.

**Exploitation** There is exploitation of more or less helpless people in all sections of our country. In some sections it is on a year-round basis. In New York's vegetable garden it is seasonal. It is a curious thing, and a fearful thing, that men will not merely do this to others, but fiercely defend it as a right.

It is but slightly gratifying to the much-abused South to be able to point a finger at New York's revealed shame in exploitation of human misery. Mon. 3-15-46

What we have all got to keep in mind is that any such example of human misery, imposed by man or men, is a failure involving all of us. What is more it involves the American way of life. The best way yet devised but one which has not yet been able to reach the exploited masses from whom, and only from whom, can come any threat to that way of life.

Failure to recognize this fact is folly and failure to do something about it is worse.

## 53 Negro College Girls Fly to Jersey Market

Times-Dispatch

Richmond, Virginia

MEMPHIS, TENN., May 31—(AP)—Fifty-three Negro college girls, riding like paratroopers, took off in two C-47 Army transports today for New Jersey to help pick asparagus and green beans.

H. L. Mitchell, president of the National Farmers Union, said they were part of around 500 college girls being flown to Millville, N. J., to work for a packing plant.

They will pick and pack the vegetables for quick freezing.

Mitchell said none of the girls had ever been in a plane before. They represented Lane College, of Jackson, Tenn., and Mississippi Industrial College, of Holly Springs, Miss. Sat - 6-1-46

## Jamaica's Protest Bans Fla. Workers

Associated

MIAMI — The demand of the Jamaican Government, that Florida be denied services of its workers because of unfair treatment, caused the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ship 3,000 Jamaicans out of Florida last week.

The workers, moved to Charleston, S.C., will be sent to the Northeast and the Midwest to work on farms, while 4,000 Bahamian farm workers in Florida will remain there to cultivate fruits and truck crops. 6-1-46

In order to protect the farmers against crop losses as a result of the removal of the Jamaican workers, the Department of Agriculture is bringing in 2,000 Barbadians, one-half of whom have already arrived. Baltimore, Md.

# 50,000 Negro Laborers Moving Northward To Harvest Crops of the Seaboard States

CHARLOTTE, N. C., May 9—(AP)—Nearly 50,000 Negro laborers are moving north through the Eastern Seaboard States in a migration that means food for the hungry world.

They are the transient workers who travel annually from the vegetable patches and orange groves of Florida to the potato fields of Maine. Their trek completed, they return to Florida for a short rest and then start all over again.

Only with their help, say Department of Agriculture officials, could the growers of quick-ripening, quick-perishing crops hope to harvest and market their products.

"They sweep across the fields like a band of hungry locusts," said J. B. Moore, of the Agriculture Department's Labor Office, which operates more than 100 farm labor supply centers for the thousands of Negroes. "During the war we raised one-third more food in the United States with one-third less labor. I don't know what we would have done without these transients, and they're as important as ever today, of course."

5-10-46 Two Groups

There are two groups of the workers—domestic migrants, nearly all natives of Florida, who this year total about 25,000; and imported West Indians, numbering about 24,000. Times-Dispatch

For the natives, the year's work begins in December, when they start harvesting Florida potatoes, snap beans, tomatoes, lettuce, celery, citrus fruits. Most of them skip Georgia and pause next at Charleston, S. C., for the vegetable and potato season in May and June. Richmond, Va.

They begin entering North Carolina about May 10 for the early vegetable harvest around Wilmington. Many of them move on to the potato area between New Bern and Elizabeth City, for a two-month season ending in mid-July, then into the Norfolk section of Virginia and across Chesapeake Bay to the Eastern Shore of Maryland for the vegetable season.

In the late Summer and Fall they travel across Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Maine. 5-10-46-Fri.

### Stay Near Coast

These migrants stick near the coast. Their great highway is United States Route 17, along which their trucks and automobiles, piled high with bedclothes, pots and pans, are common sights.

Along the way they live in the labor centers or in camps provided by farmers. They do their own cooking, and the labor office provides tents, beds, mattresses, oil stoves and medical service at the centers. They pay rent and have their own loose government—chairmen and committees for fire control, recreation and religious activities. Moore said they behaved themselves well and seldom made trouble.

On a yearly basis, he said, they are poorly paid, though they may average about $4 or $5 a day while at work. Weather and the necessity for traveling reduce their returns, for they work on a piece basis at prevailing local rates.

While the natives are free agents, the West Indians must go where they are sent by the government. Moore explained that they are shifted only to areas where acute labor shortages exist. The government pays their transportation, by bus or train, and they work under contracts renewable every six months. They were first imported in 1943, when the number of domestic workers fell to 16,000.

### Indispensable

The West Indians harvest all kinds of crops, from potatoes to strawberries. In past years they have been indispensable in the peach areas of Spartanburg, S. C., and the sandhills of North Carolina, and they are expected to be just as helpful when the peaches ripen again in June and July.

They all speak English—with a decided British accent—and adapt themselves readily to local conditions.

"Like the domestic workers, they give very little trouble," Moore said. "And they are very clean people. When they enter an area, the laundries and dry-cleaning establishments are flooded with work. I have been present on several occasions when a British agent met with them, and he always said at the end of the conference, 'Remember, keep your bodies clean.'"

# Bahama Native Attacked Near Bay Minette

Advertiser Montgomery, Ala

## Three White Men Blamed With Stabbing Negro Following Argument

On 5-10-46

BAY MINETTE, ALA., May 9—Three white men late yesterday afternoon attacked one of the natives from Bahama with a knife and forced his removal to a Mobile hospital, Sheriff C. E. Garrett said tonight.

The three white men, John L. Huggins, C. G. Huggins, and Wayne R. Huggins, all brothers, operate a farm near here and were released on a bail of $750 each, the sheriff continued.

A dispute between the Negro and the brothers started the trouble, Garrett added, and a Mr. Anderson, in charge of the camp of more than 450 Negroes imported to aid in harvesting the potato crop asked that warrants be issued.

Many of the hired natives, here to aid the potato harvest, expressed some fear at remaining in the vicinity after the knife battle, but today all were in the fields.

The accident happened at Loxley, a small community near here, Garrett said, and the sheriff added, three deputies were stationed in the camp tonight to prevent any more trouble.

"We don't expect any further trouble," Garrett said, "but we intend to furnish all protection needed at the camp where the natives are quartered."

The Huggins brothers were charged by Anderson with "assault with intent to murder," the sheriff said, "but so far Anderson has not signed the warrant."

The native in the Mobile hospital was not injured seriously and, although he was cut twice, neither wound was deep but both bled profusely, the sheriff continued. 9-5-1946

# 10,000 West Indians Work On U.S. Farms

Chicago Defender Chicago, Ill. 5-18-46

WASHINGTON — Almost 10,000 West Indian agricultural workers are now employed on farms in this country, the Labor Branch of the U. S. Department of Agriculture announced last week. Sat. 5-18-46

Approximately 2,600 Jamaicans and Bahamians are employed in Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland, and about 7,000 on farms in Florida. It is estimated that 12,000 West Indians will be brought here this year to help with the cultivation and harvesting of crops.

# 60,000 Foreigners Help With Harvest

Defender Chicago, Ill.

WASHINGTON. — Nearly 60,000 foreign workers are in the United States helping with this year's harvest, the Labor Branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced recently. Sat. 9-28-46

Mexicans, totaling 40,000 make up the largest group. Jamaicans total 12,000. Bahamians, 5,000; Barbadians, 3,000; Newfoundlanders 600, and British Hondurans, 150.

## HAROLD MARTIN

# Black Man Leaves The Black Belt

Pub'd 5-22-46 Atlanta Constitution

IN THE ALABAMA BLACK BELT—Before I get on with my story maybe I had better explain for the benefit of my friends in the red Georgia hills who don't know much about Alabama's geography—that dateline refers to the color of the soil hereabouts, not the population. The Black Belt is that great section of Central Alabama which begins about the time you leave the Montgomery city limits, runs west to the Tombigbee River, and there bends north on into Mississippi. Geologists say it was the bed of an ancient inland sea, a great lake left here when the primeval ocean receded. Maybe it was. There was water here once, at any rate, for on the tops of the rolling hummocks, which are white and chalky, instead of black, you can find sharks' teeth and the bones of prehistoric fish.

The Black Belt, years ago, was one of the great cotton-growing areas of the world. The boll weevil killed it, and almost overnight it turned from cotton to cattle. Now you can drive through it mile after mile and see nothing but rolling, prairie-like land, marked by few trees and deep in grass. Here and there you will see a little cotton, but not much. Instead you drive through miles and miles of clover, and oats, and oats and vetch growing together. 5-22-46

## Cattle Everywhere

Everywhere you look you see cattle. Rotund, ruminative Angus and Herefords, purebred stock for breeding purposes, grazing placidly, rolling in fat. Purebred bulls of both breeds preside over harems of common range cows on the farms that raise beef for the butcher. You see many dairy herds. Nearly everybody seems to double up in his cattle raising, running beef type and dairy type on the same farms. In front of nearly every house you'll see four or five milk cans, back from the creamery, and along the road somewhere pens and sloping ramps for loading beef animals onto trucks. Atlanta

The country itself is beautiful in the rich greenness of Spring. The flowers and grasses that must have made this land a vision of beauty when it was virgin prairie, generations ago, have come back with the demise of row-crop cultivation. The pastures are full of daisies, and black-eyed Susans, and the fragile pink and white cups of the primrose. The land itself looks prosperous, for the labors and the spare dollars of the last decade have gone into building it up. The living quarters still show the scars of the days when the land was cotton-poor. Many houses need paint, and barns and outbuildings are shabby and rundown. When a whole countryside has gone to seed, you have to build up the land first. The white-columned mansion with a television set and an electric pressure cooker has to wait while the bankroll fattens.

## North Industrial Problem

The term Black Belt could once have applied both to the land and to a great number of its people. Now the Negro has gone, and the shanties where he lived rot in the pastures. He left with the death of cotton, for there was no place on a cattle ranch for hundreds of hands to hold a plowstock and swing a hoe. The "Negro problem" of this section resolved itself. The North, and the industrial cities of the South, inherited it. 5-22-46

A Negro storekeeper said: "They jus' went like birds. Went to Chicago and Deetroit. Went to New York and St. Louis, and to Pittsburgh. Went everywhere." He pointed to two small colored boys, sitting on the porch of his store. "Nobody here since dinner but them two little boys. Uster be on a day like this, too wet to work in the fields, you never see the like of peoples. Be 40 here, laughin' and playin' baseball and talkin' and havin' fun. Thirty families worked on Mr. Robertson's place before he turned to cattle. Now they's four. Everybody else gone. Atlanta, Ga.

"Gone, gone. I hears from some of them. They makin' it all right, right now, workin' one place and another, doing this and that. They makin' out all right, long as jobs is good. But things change around and jobs get scarce and they goin' to want to come back home. And they won't be no place for 'em to come to."

## Need Men

Buckner Webb, of Baumgartner plantation, does not share that view. His 2,400-acre holding is all in small grain and pasture now. He works a half dozen families. If the migration ever turns South again, he can use plenty more.

"We just think there's nothing for them to do. Nothing for them to do as sharecroppers, maybe, but working for wages there'll be plenty. We haven't even begun to develop this country. There's good land, plenty of it, never touched for cotton. It will make hay and grain and pasture if it's cleared and handled right, and we need men to handle it."

I wish Buck Webb would ride up the road for 20 miles or so and see that lonesome black man, keeping his little store. He might make the old fellow feel better about the future of his race.

# Bahama Negroes Harvest Peach Crop In Coweta

NEWNAN, Ga., June 28—(AP)—Fifty Bahamian negroes are being employed by two of Coweta county's largest peach growers and packers, and their employers report their work has been "invaluable" in relieving the labor shortage.

The Johnson - Moody orchards are employing half the group, V. E. Rowe of Senoia, the other half. The Bahamians are paid 12 1-2 cents per bushel for packing with a guarantee of $18 per week if rain prevents their working full time.

They are housed in barracks. Separate quarters are provided for married workers. Because of the negroes are part of a larger group brought into the United States to assist farmers in harvesting their crop. a difference in appetite from the United States Negro, they are permitted to prepare their own food.

# Migratory Workers Sent North By Air

Memphis Ward.
Memphis Ward

MEMPHIS—(SNS)— Five hundred migratory workers are being transported from the South to New Jersey by air, H. L. Mitchell, President of the National Farm Labor Union, announced today in Memphis. Memphis, Tenn

These workers, members of the National Farm Labor Union, are going by plane to work for 3 months at the Deerfield Packing Co. plant in Bridgeton, New Jersey. 6-7-46-Sun.

All of the workers are women students who have been recruited from Negro colleges in the southern states by the union. The first groups to make the trip by air left Jackson, Mississippi, May 29th and 30th. Groups are scheduled to leave Memphis, Tenn. by air on May 31st and June 6th. Groups will leave Macon, Ga., June 4th and Atlanta, June 5th. The last group will leave from Little Rock on June 6th. The workers are being flown in DC 3 planes by the Wells Cargo Lines in Philadelphia. Transportation was arranged by officials of the Deerfield Packing Co. and the National Farm Labor Union. Memphis, Tenn.

H. L. Mitchell, President of the Union, said: "For the past three years we have sent thousands of members of our union out of the South to work during their off season on farms. They have gone to packing houses and canneries on the east and west coasts. Heretofore, they have traveled by train and bus. Women workers who are attending schools in the South go to New Jersey each year around June 1st and during their vacation earn enough money to aid them in continuing their education. They are needed in the Deerfield Packing Co. plant at a time when all of our other members are working on the cotton crop."

# South Feeling Loss Of Negro Farmers

The Black Dispatch
Oklahoma City, Okla

JACKSON, Miss. — (ANP) — The threat of industry hangs over th south's agricultural head.

Wartime migration from southern farms was reported last week to be shaking up the south's pre-Civil war from economy in a move spearheaded by heards of determined Negro workers who have forsaken the plantations for factory jobs with a vow never to return to agriculture. Sat. 7-20-46

A great testing ground for the social, economical and political transition now in process all over the south is the rich Delta country in these states where Negroes outnumber whites. Stricken with fear, white men see the gradual breaking of the social, economic and political chains that once bound the Negro.

He is considered a danger to white supremacy because in many areas Negroes outnumber whites. Soon, they say, Negroes will begin to vote and will be running the government of counties and towns. Negroes domination, they hold, can be averted only by equalization of the population.

On the other hand, whites concede that Negro workers are badly needed for farm chores. During the war, the rich Delta area was hit hard by the heavy migration of Negro farm workers to nearby cities where war industries flourished. High industrial wages plus additional personal freedom have been potent factors why migratory Negro farm workers are determined never to return to the farm.

Statistical light on the great wartime migration from farms to industry in the south was recently supplied by Dr. E. J. Eberling, chief of research of the Tennessee Department of Employment security, who reported that 515,979 persons deserted farm jobs in Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Florida and Georgia. Only the state of Florida was able to register a population gain during the war years, picking up 226-906 persons, Dr. Eberling disclosed. Mississippi lost 227,599 persons, he said. Sat. 7-20-46

Already two dozen or more mechanical cotton pickers, which cost around $5,000, have invaded the fertile cotton area as an indication that the potent migration has hastened agricultural mechanization in the wake of southern industrialization. Mechanical cotton pickers, which requires a skilled workman, are said to pick about 500 pounds of cotton per hour.

Caught between the need for Negro farm labor and the Negro's demands for equal citizenship rights, white "supremacy" advocates are reported to be seeking ways and means to equalize the white and Negro population by bringing the underprivileged white farmers of the himm country, who live in the poor red clay area in the northern and eastern parts of Mississippi, into the fertile Delta as sharecroppers. Sat. 7-20-46

Such a move is almost doomed to failure, many Delta whites think, because of the reluctance of poor whites of the hilly country to surrender their freedom of working for themselves. They would rather be free and poor. Meanwhile, spirited Negroes, who constitute the cream of farm workers, remain in cities while those they left behind demand more pay and more freedom.

# The Broad 'A's' You Hear In Virginia Orchards Come From Bahama Apple Pickers

Times-Dispatch
Richmond, Va.
Sun. 9-15-46

**By Paul Saunier, Jr.**
*Times-Dispatch Staff Writer*

CROZET, Sept. 14—If you're in an apple orchard and hear some British broad "A's," in words like "hahlf-pahst" and such, don't expect to see an Englishman with a monocle. Those words came from the smiling Negro apple-picker on the ladder nearby.

He's one of the thousands of British West Indians, Crown subjects all, who are helping harvest American food crops. If he's working in Virginia, he's a Bahama Islander, because they're the ones who've proved most satisfactory to Southern growers.

A half-dozen government-sponsored camps—in the mountainous fruit area and on the garden-crop Eastern Shore—house the workers now in this State. They first came to the States in 1943 as part of the wartime emergency labor program, and successive waves have followed across the straits to Florida and then north with the harvests, as the growers requested the labor. They're paid whatever wages are prevailing in the localities in which they work, and growers generally have been pleased with the results.

About 90 per cent of the workers now are men, although women also were recruited in the first year of the war labor program. Men may visit the Bahamas for 30- to 90-day furloughs and return here for further work, but once the women are back in the islands, they're there to stay.

**Males More Satisfactory**

Males have proved "much better" workers, one grower said, and this fact resulted in the present "more-males" policy.

"But one thing is true of all of 'em," he emphasized, "and that is that they work best on piecework. By the hour or by the day, they're inclined to drag around."

In the Crozet apple area, at present, 50 cents an hour is paid for day labor and 14 cents a bushel for apple picking. The top day's pay so far, for 128 bushels, was $17.92 for one Bahamian.

When picking in the orchards, most of the men wear various types of work clothes, including much ex-Army equipment, but a few "cards" show up in various combinations of that clothing generally classified as "jitterbug." American taste in apparel doesn't extend to the women, however, who retain the peculiar habit of wearing dresses over denim work pants and American felt hats or caps over their island bandanas.

**Speech Unmistakable**

But even when they're dressed like local laborers, it's their speech that marks them.

The broad "a" seems common to all, but the other elements of their lingo vary. Some speak with a musical drawl, but in others there's a strong flavor of the speech heard on the offshore Virginia islands or on the Carolina Banks, where traces of Seventeenth Century English still are found.

"Hoi toide" (high tide), "toity" (30), "foist" (first), are heard frequently. Their similarity to Brooklynese is purely coincidental, from all reports.

They speak of "woating in elackshuns" (voting in elections), and the job foreman is "Mr. Bahsm'n" ((boss man).

Their names are almost wholly English. One girl, who was picking apples in an orchard on a steep Blue Ridge slope just below the Skyline Drive in Rappahannock County, had the name of Williams, but she pronounced it like a Frenchman with a Chincoteague Island accent, if such can be considered possible. It came out "Woi—yeemz," or something like it.

**Facilities Provided**

Most of the camps are of the tent variety, but the one at White Hall, near Crozet, has wooden barracks left from German PW camp days. The workers are charged 50 cents a week for a cot, mattress and blanket, and 90 cents a day for two meals. At present only men are housed here.

A look in the barracks after the evening meal shows them to be a clean, well-behaved and pleasant lot. They smile a great deal. Most of them are quite literate, and will be seen writing letters home or reading their Bibles. For recreation they play cards, checkers and even chess, and several will always be found clustered about a battered phonograph, listening to "jahzz."

Several pianists will be found in every group, and the recreation hall here often rings with music.

An estimated 70 per cent of the men send the bulk of their wages to relatives in the Bahamas, but a small amount per day is automatically deducted from everyone's pay and sent to the island government by an officer commonly termed "the 75-cent mahn." There it's held in trust for the workers' return.

When they'll go back to the islands to stay they don't know. American fruit and truck growers have kept up the demand for the Bahamian workers, and most of the islanders appear happy with their lot here. So for this season anyway, and probably next year, from all indications, some Virginia apples will be shipped in "bauxes," and trucks still will load at "hahlf-pahst."

# College Girls Make Tuition While Working In New Jersey.

Memphis Ward
Memphis Ave.
Sunday 7-30-46

The 500 college girls that took advantage of the opportunity to go to New Jersey and work in the canning plants during the summer are realizing many advantages. Not only are they able to make their tuition, but they are able to obtain certain educational experiences that are not otherwise available.

It has been the custom for the Deerfield Packing Company at Bridgeton, New Jersey to come south each summer and obtain labor from the different schools where students were anxious to help earn their tuition for the coming sessions. During the last three years such a project has worked well and many girls from the Mid-

Secretary of Commerce, cooperations of the unions and the work of the project is quite commendable.

He claims that the unions eliminated the labor racketeers that formerly preyed upon immigrants, often sending them to distant points where they still found themselves jobless.

These college girls are a part of the nearly 3,000. Southern workers who assisted on Northern farms during the peak vegetable seasons. This is said in spite of the Ku Kluxers. This is said in 56 and the NFDU, these workers move annually from areas of labor surplus to areas of labor shortage. They are returned home at the end of the season, which usually coincides with the peak cotton season in the south.

Trips can be made to New York over the week end.

WALLACE INTERESTED 7-30-46

According to a report prepared at the request of Henry A Wallace

## Peonage Charge Filed In U. S. District Court

A complaint, charging Robert Dickson, of Lowndes County, with the unlawful arrest and return of Aaron Smith to a condition of peonage, was filed before Judge C. B. Kennamer of the U. S. District Court.

A hearing was set for Jan. 25 at 10 o'clock before the U. S. commissioner.

# PEONAGE CHARGE DENIED BY MAN

MONTGOMERY, Ala., Jan. 25—(AP)—Robert Dickson, Lowndes County, Alabama, landowner, was bound over to the Federal Grand Jury by U. S. Commissioner Wallace M. Sloane today on a charge of peonage.

He pleaded innocent and was released under $5,000 bond.

The complaint charged that Dickson "did unlawfully, knowingly and feloniously arrest and return one Aaron Smith (Negro) to a condition of peonage."

Sloane said this testimony was given at the preliminary hearing:

Smith said he had worked for Dickson 20 years but quit to "hire out" to a storekeeper, Mrs. Frank Gordon, at White Hall, near Lowndesboro.

The Negro and Mrs. Gordon both testified that on or about Jan. 14 Dickson came into the store, seized the Negro and put him in his car, and, when the woman protested, said he had a warrant for his arrest.

Mrs. Gordon related, however, the sheriff's office told her there was no warrant.

Smith said Dickson claimed he owed him about $170 and would not let him quit his job. The Negro claimed that after seizing him in the store, Dickson took him to his office, abused him and brandished a gun.

The commissioner said Dickson did not testify.

# ALA. FARMER ACCUSED OF PEONAGE

Montgomery, Ala. (ANP) — Robert Dickson, local farmer, was held to the federal grand jury last week on a charge of peonage. Dickson is accused of forcing Aaron Smith, colored, to return to work for him after Smith had taken a job with another employer.

U. S. commissioner Wallace M. Sloane said Smith testified that after working for Dickson for 20 years he quit to hire out to a storekeeper, Mrs. Frank Gordon. Both Smith and Mrs. Gordon testified that Dickson came to the store for Smith and forced him to leave in a car. When Mrs. Gordon protested this action, Dickson said he had a warrant for Smith's arrest. The sheriff's office reports there was no such warrant issued.

Smith said Dickson declared he could not leave his job because of indebtedness to him of $170.

# Woman, 25, Held on Virginia Farm

## Justice Dept. Pledges to Make Investigation

### "ESCAPES" TO D.C.

### Work-Hardened Hands Covered With Calluses

WASHINGTON.

**The Department of Justice last week promised an immediate investigation of "slavery" charges made by Miss Polly Johnson against Mr. and Mrs. Beale Broach, farm family, of Index P.O., King George County, Va.**

**Miss Johnson, who now resides at 1111 9th St., N.W., placed in the hands of the NAACP affidavits to the effect that she had spent most of her 25 years of life with the Broaches in a condition of involuntary servitude.**

**While being "held" by the Virginians, Miss Johnson was not permitted to go to school or church, to have friends or playmates, nor to visit anyone, the Justice Department was told by the Washington branch NAACP, which asked for the investigation.**

**Her sphere of activity was confined to the Broachs' farm, and that was "where she stole away" to visit a neighbor. Mrs. Broach found out about it and threatened to beat her if she ever left the premises again, the affidavits state.**

**Beaten with Horsewhip**

**The sordid story of how Miss Johnson was beaten with a horse-whip, abused and mistreated by the Broachs, and how she was made to sleep in a hen house; to work from morning until night in all kinds of weather doing every imaginable chore in the house and on the farm is detailed in the affidavits.**

Miss Johnson told the AFRO that she was forced to "grub" stumps, cut down trees, haul logs and do other heavy farm work under the threats of being beaten.

According to witnesses, when Miss Johnson was finally rescued, she was in an extremely nervous condition, seemed half-starved, and her hands and feet were swollen, had corns and callouses and were cracked open, and looked like nothing they had ever seen on a human being.

The affidavits went on to tell the story of how the sympathetic neighbors had finally helped the young woman to escape when she indicated that she wanted to leave the Broaches because of inhuman treatment which she was receiving.

Daniel Lomax, a King George County, Va., automobile mechanic, in a deposition placed in the hands of the Justice Department, tells how he met Miss Johnson on the road one morning in March after Mr. Broach had gone to work at the Dalgren Proving Grounds.

**Discovered on Road**

**Mrs. Broach, a school teacher, had also left when Lomax discovered the young woman dressed in damp, ragged clothes and wearing Mr. Broach's castoff size 11 shoes — the only foot wear she had. He first took her to his mother's house in Shiloh, then brought her to Washington where she is presently staying with his sister, Miss Mattie Lomax.**

**The case was brought to the attention of the NAACP when Miss Lomax wrote to the organization disclosing the tragic situation.**

**Three members of the Washington branch, NAACP, Leon Ransom, chairman of the legal committee; Austin Fickling, member of the legal committee, and Mrs. Beatrice M. Reed, administrative assistant, conducted an investigation and placed the case in the hands of the Department of Justice.**

## Abe Unknown to Her

**MISS POLLY JOHNSON,**

**whose 25 years of "involuntary servitude" on a King George County, Va,. farm is being investigated by the Department of Justice, following her "escape" to Washington. The case was called to the attention of Federal officials by the Washington branch NAACP.**

## In The Ranks of Labor

# The Informer Georgia Farmer Arrested On Peonage Charge

Houston Texas

CONYERS, Ga., — (ANP) — A prosperious, 65-year-old white farmer of this locality was arrested by the FBI last week on a charge of holding five Negroes in peonage. The arrested man, Roswell Pierce Biggers, who once before faced peonage charges, was freed several hours after his arrest on $4,000 bail posted following his arraignment before Judge David J. Meyerhardt, United States commissioner, in Atlanta.

According to Harvey H. Tysinger, Assistant United States attorney, Biggers obtained approximately a dozen warrants against five of the Negroes who worked on his farm, charging them with "getting money under false pretenses." The Negroes were arrested by H. L. McCart, sheriff of Rockdale county, put in the county jail and subsequently turned over to Biggers to work on his 1000-acre farm, Tysinger said.

The law under which such warrents could be sworn out was declared void recently by the Georgia Supreme court.

**One of the alleged peonage victims allegedly owed Biggers $2, came to Atlanta, some 40 miles from the Biggers' farm, where he got a job. The victim sent Biggers a money order in payment of the debt, but Biggers refused to accept it, accordng to Assistant Attorney Tysinger.**

**A short while later, Biggers reportedly obtained a warrant against the Negro and had him arrested and returned to his farm. This man, after several week's work, asked the farmer if he had not worked off his debt. Biggers was reported to have informed him the debt had been increased to $12 to pay for the costs of the trip to Atlanta to have him arrested.**

**The man's father who was a tenant on the big Biggers' farm, paid the $12 and then moved to Atlanta with his son, the official reported.**

**In another instance, Tysinger said, a victim named Booker T. Johnson was arrested four times for the same debt, while still another had left the farm in Conyers for work wih the Atlanta Sanitary department, was arrested on the job by Atlanta detectives after the Rockdale sheriff had produced a warrant for his detention.**

"Biggers was accused of working the Negroes for fifty cents to one dollar a day on all but about fifty cents or one dollar a week to pay their fines," Tysinger explained. "He never would give any receipts and the Negroes said they did not know when they had paid up and were out of debt."

Tysinger said FBI agents had received complaints from one of the victims that he had been beaten on several occasions. Biggers, who refused to talk with reporters in Atlanta was arrested once before on a similar charge in 1917, resulting first in a mistrial and then an acquittal.

The case is returnable the first Monday in October, when the matter will be taken before the federal grand jury.

**Biggers' arrest was made on charges of violating Section 444, Title 18, of the United States code, which prohibits "involuntary slavery and servitude." The charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a $5,000 fine.**

Names of the five victims involved were given by the fedral attorney as Bobbie Rakesstraw, Felmon Jackson, Booker T. Johnson, Lester Bans and J. C. Banks, all of whom are now working in or near Atlanta. Investigation of other alleged abuses of the anti-peonage law is continuing.

According to reports, it was Biggers' custom to pay out Negroes in jail on slight offenses and then work them on his farm. Justice of the Peace J. H. Pirkle said this was not unusual "in this part of the country."

**Biggers' farm is located in Rockdale county, a short distance from Stone mountain, where the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan once staged many frequent ceremonials.**

The county also adjoins Walton county, scene of the recent "massacre" of four farm workers and is only about 25 miles from the Williams "Murder Farm," where federal agents, investigating a peonage case in Jasper county about 25 years ago, dug up bodies of 11 Negroes who had been slain. Many other notorious convicts as they made one of their many escapes from the Georgia peonage and police injustice regime were generally silent about the accusations and two $1,000 fines for Rockwall stable. former Sheriff Jack Pullen, when Federal Judge T. Whitfield Davidson found them guilty of violating the civil rights of R. D. Andrew.

**Andrew, a Negro charged that he was held in jail without charge and forced to work on a Rockwall County landowner's farm. Also convicted on the same charge and sentenced to six months in jail were Luther Hunter, Rockwall jailer and William Frazier, Kaufman County con-**

Chicago, Ill.

## Texas Sheriffs Jailed On Civil Rights Charge

DALLAS — The mixture of

# Conyers People Are Silent On U. S. Charges of Peonage

Atlanta, Ga., Constitution
Aug. 28, 1946

By DAN BAILEY,
Constitution Staff Writer.

CONYERS, Aug. 27—People of this town of 1,500 persons were quiet and uncommunicative tonight after learning of Federal charges against one of the town's most prominent citizens for alleged practice of peonage.

Sheriff W. L. McCants, of Rockdale County, summed up what the citizens think of Roswell Pierce Biggers, prosperous 65-year-old farmer and livestock dealer, who is charged with holding five Negroes in peonage:

"I have known Mr. Biggers for 30 years," the Sheriff said. "He is a fine man."

McCants said he didn't understand "a man who had done so much for Negroes being charged with such a crime."

The Sheriff remarked then that Biggers "works more Negroes than any other man in the county."

The Sheriff was reluctant to talk to reporters. His attitude was almost belligerent. When asked about Biggers, he countered, "What do you want to know for?" What business is it of yours?"

Reporters then asked the Sheriff if he had the warrants which had been sworn out against the Negroes charging them with obtaining money under false pretenses. The Sheriff said, "No." It developed the warrants were in the Courthouse. "Can we see them tonight?" he was asked. The answer again was "no."

"The Federal authorities have all the information, see them," the Sheriff advised.

McCants further advised newspapermen against going to Biggers' farm.

J. R. Pirkle, the Rockdale Justice of the Peace, before whom warrants against the Negroes were sworn, disclaimed any knowledge of the peonage charges and said he didn't know Biggers had been arrested.

Clerk of Court Luther M. McDowell said the court records were locked up and "I would not think under any circumstances of coming down at this time of night (10 p. m.) to show them."

The Clerk did say that Felmon Jackson, one of the Negroes involved, about 12 years ago had been convicted of manslaughter, and that another Negro, Bobby Rakestraw, was convicted of larceny, and that his fine had been paid by Biggers.

Clerk Dowell declared that the system under which Negroes could work out their fines was not a court procedure, but was something that was worked out between the convicted man and the man who paid the fine.

Everywhere the townspeople were tightlipped. Small groups gathered. Everyone seemed on the side of the big livestock dealer whose modern farm two miles from town is the largest in Rockdale County.

## There's Much Of That Here

Daily World Atlanta, Ga. Sunn. 9-1-46

The U. S. Justice Department has lodged charges against a 65-year-old Rockdale County farmer for holding five Negroes in peonage on his three thousand acre farm. According to the Department, Roswell Pierce Biggers against whom the charges are being pressed, had arranged a dozen warrants against the five Negroes within the past two years, charging them with getting money under false pretense, and that they were jailed for a few days, only to be turned over again to Biggers to work his plantation without pay. Biggers is reported to be held under a $4,000 Bond.

This is not an uncommon practice in Georgia. In a surprisingly large number of rural areas, there appears to be a common tie-up on the part of local law enforcement officials and the wealthy farm owners. Instances have been uncovered whereby certain Negroes, not employed by any white man, would be spotted by these large land owners and their names turned over to the city police or deputy. The idea in this was that these Negroes could be depended upon to show up in town on Saturday evening. In such instance, they were arrested and jailed for drunkeness or disorderly conduct. On Monday, usually the day set for trial, the presiding officer or judge fines the victim a nominal fee of $10, $15, and in some instances, $5, which the average rural Negro seldom has during the 'lean' or farm season. Unable to pay the requred fine and frantic to evade a 'road assignment,' these Negro victims will accept the offer of anyone to get them back home, no matter if it does cost him three or four times amount being demanded.

But, in the words of one victim of this scheme, "the whole thing is cooked up between the deputy, the judge and the farm owner. You go to his farm and work it out. But it takes two to three years, in several instances much more, to work out these fines." The judge and the night policeman and the farmer understand the whole procedure. It is a trap from which certain type Negroes cannot escape. It is all built on the theory that these Negroes cannot escape. It is all built on the theory that these Negroes will have to come to town Saturday afternoon—there is no where else to go. Sun. 9-1-46

We hope the Justice Department will not let this case drop. The practice is more general in Georgia than most of us believe. It should be stopped.

## Grand Jury Indicts Four On Peonage

The Advertiser Montgomery, Ala. Sat 9-14-46

## Former State Senator Released On Bond In Tuscaloosa

TUSCALOOSA, ALA., Sept. 13.—(AP)—Four Pickens County men, including a former member of the State Legislature, were arraigned here today under a peonage conspiracy indictment returned by a U. S. Grand Jury.

Released on $1,000 bond each, they were charged with having removed and "kept in physical custody" a Negro, Willie F. Will, from Cordova, in Walker County, to Reform, Ala., last April.

Those arraigned were R. Bruce Doughty, former State senator and nominee for the House next year, Eddie Lawton Doughty, William Ambrose and James Vernie Sanders.

The indictment charged that Ambrose and Sanders forcibly removed the Negro from Cordova to Reform, where he was "kept in physical custody" on the grounds that he owed money to R. Bruce Doughty.

The indictment further alleged that Will was told that he must "perform satisfactory labor" in order to pay the debt.

The men were arraigned before U. S. Commissioner S. H. Strott.

## FARMER IS ACCUSED OF NEGRO PEONAGE

The Times New York, N. Y.

### FBI Says Georgian, Charged Likewise in 1916, Had Five Framed and Put to Work

Wed. 8-28-46

ATLANTA, Ga., Aug. 27 (U.P.)—Roswell P. Biggers, a prosperous 65-year-old farmer, was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation today on a charge of holding five Negroes in peonage on his farm near Atlanta.

He was released on $4,000 bond after a hearing before David J. Meyerhardt, United States commissioner, and will fave a Federal grand jury here in October.

The complaint filed with Mr. Meyerhardt charged Biggers specifically with "unlawfully causing Booker T. Johnson (one of the Negroes) to be arrested and returned to a condition of peonage" about May 30.

In Washington, the Justice Department said four other Negroes were involved. Their names were said to be Bobby Rakestraw, Felmon Jackson, Lester Banks and J. C. Banks.

According to the Justice Department, it was the second time Biggers had been charged with peonage. He first was indicted in 1916, but his hearing ended in a mistrial and he was acquitted later.

The complaint accused Biggers of arranging a dozen warrants against the five Negroes, charging them with obtaining money under false pretense. In each case, the Justice Department said, the Negroes were held in the Rockdale County jail at Conyers, Ga., for a short time and then turned over to Biggers to "work out their fines" on his 1,000-acre farm.

The complaint filed with Commissioner Meyerhardt was based on evidence dug up by the FBI.

Rockdale County is due east of Atlanta, and adjoins Walton County, where four Negroes were lynched recently by a mob of white men.

County Attorney J. M. McCalla said at Conyers that he knew nothing about the case, but said that Johnson, Jackson and Rakestraw had lived on Biggers' farm.

Mr. McCalla said he did not recall the details of the Negroes' arrest because it was handled in a justice of the peace court.

"I understand, however, that their cases were settled," Mr. McCalla said, "without any of them ever being indicted."

The county attorney said Biggers had a clear record as far as the circuit court was concerned.

Biggers, located in downtown Atlanta, refused to comment.

## Peonage Is Charged To Georgia Farmer

The News Birmingham, Ala

CONYERS, Ga., Aug. 29—(AP)—A prosperous 65-year-old farmer and livestock dealer here has been arrested on a federal charge of holding five Negroes in peonage.

The farmer, whose modern farm two miles from here is one of the two largest in Rockdale County, was released on a $4,000 bond Tuesday after waiving a hearing. His trial was set for October.

Asst. U. S. Dist. Atty. H. H. Tysinger said the farmer, Roswell Pierce Biggers, threw the Negroes in jail for failure to pay debts, and later obtained their release on condition they return to work on his farm. Thurs. 8-29-46

The prosecutor said Biggers obtained about a dozen warrants against five Negroes on his farm charging them with "getting money under false pretenses."

One negro, who owed Biggers $2, Tysinger said, went to Atlanta and got a job. The Negro then sent Biggers a $2 money order in payment of the debt, but Biggers refused to accept it, he added.

Shortly afterward, Tysinger said, Biggers obtained a warrant against the Negro, and had him arrested and returned to the farm.

Then, according to Tysinger, the Negro after several weeks' work, asked the farmer if he had not worked off his debt, and Biggers replied the debt had been increased to $12 to pay for the cost of having him arrested.

Justice of the Peace J. H. Pirkle, before whom Biggers swore out the warrants for the Negroes' arrests, said he had known Biggers for 40 years and that he was a "highly respected" citizen.

Augusta, Ga., Herald

## Three Alabama Men Held for Peonage

GUSCALOOSA, Ala., Sept. 14—(UP) — State Rep. Elect R. Bruce Doughty, and three other whiteto work after he had gone to Cor- returned him to Doughty's farm. men, today, were under $1,000dova, Ala.

bonds on peonage charges. The negro said that Doughty

The FBI said that Doughty, hishad refused to accept $53 which

brother, Eddie L. Doughty, Re-he said that Will owed him, telling

form, Ala., Policeman William Am-him that the debt had increased

brose, and James V. Sanders, wereto $110. When he offered him

charged with holding Willie F.$110, Doughty refused that too.

Will, negro farm worker, in invol-Will said. Then he said he left

untary servitude. Doughty's farm.

Will told the FBI that they forced him to return to Doughty's farm. He charged that the quartet came to Cordova, beat him, and

# Fugitive from Slave Field Tells His Story

By DAVID CARPENTER

HOUSTON, Texas.

You people who live in the North know that the Negro people in the South suffer from oppression and terror. You are horrified by what happened in Columbia, Tenn. You are aroused to indignation by the reports of other anti-Negro atrocities. But I am sure you would find it hard to believe that the Negro people in the South still are actually kept in the bonds of chattel slavery. I would like to tell you the story of what happened in this city on March 27, 1946.

On that day a man walked into the office of Mrs. Lulu B. White, executive secertary of the Houston National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He looked like a "wild man." The hair on his head was as long as a woman's. He had a matted beard which rubbed against the third button of his tattered and dirty shirt. He wore a pair of old and worn pants. And he had no shoes. To look at him you would think he was about 60 years old.

The man was obviously frightened. He didn't know how to begin. But he finally started talking. He needed help, he said.

His name was Willie Perkins. He was 33 years old. He comes from Durant, Miss., where he was born on the Hick's plantation. He had just bummed his way to Baytown, Texas, on a freight train from Durant, Miss., and a man in Baytown had told him to come to the Houston NAACP where they would help him.

As Willie Perkins spoke in his frightened voice, you learned a lot you didn't know about the oppression of the Negro people in the South. And you learned why he looked the way he did.

Willie Perkins had been born on the Hick's plantation. When he was a young fellow, his parents had died of the flu. Then a "Captain" Openwald, who owned a plantation about 10 miles from Durant, took him from that plantation. For almost six years now he had been

working on "Captain" Openwald's plantation, plowing, chopping cotton, cutting wood, "cleaning out the barn so the cows would have a clean place to stand."

When he was not working in the field, he would be sent into the woods to fell timber. He had to work every day, including Sunday, and was not allowed to go to church. He had to work from sunrise to way after sundown.

"Captain" Openwald would ride over the fields on a horse, cursing the workers, speeding them up. When they did not work fast enough to suit him, he would jump off his horse, and beat the workers over the head and back with a stick.

Willie Perkins showed Mrs. White the scars which he had gotten as a result of these beatings.

All the clothes that Willie Perkins got were the cast-off clothes of "Captain" Openwald, even the underwear for winter.

While "Captain" Openwald was terribly concerned about the welfare of his cows, Willie Perkins and another Negro named Robert lived in a shack in the backyard of the "big house." They slept on bare boards in an old wagon until finally "Captain" Openwald's family had worn out a mattress which was given to them.

Willie Perkins and Robert ate their food on the back porch of the "big house" all the time, winter and summer. Their diet consisted of salt pork, cornbread and buttermilk. They asked for molasses, but didn't get it. They had no cabbage or greens.

Willie Perkins worked on the plantation, as close as he can remember, almost six years. He never received one cent of pay. When he would ask "Captain" Openwald for his money, he was always put off with promises.

Now you may wonder why Willie Perkins just didn't quit and leave "Captain" Openwald's plantation. Well, Willie Perkins wasn't allowed to leave the plantation. There were guards all around the place.

And, as Willie told his story, you learned why he had long hair and a long beard. "Captain" Openwald made him wear his hair that way so it would be easy to recognize him if he should run away. And "Captain" Openwald threatened to find them and bring them back if they tried to escape.

But one day late in March, the guards were out in the field with the other workers. "Captain" Openwald and his family went to town in their automobile. As soon as they left, Willie Perkins and Robert ran away and caught a freight train.

That was how he got here. And now all he wanted was for Mrs. White to keep "Captain" Openwald from recapturing him, and to get his pay for him.

The NAACP in Houston has already called in the Department of Justice to investigate the case of Willie Perkins. Other steps are being taken to help Willie Perkins.

# Peonage Charged to Four in Ala.

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — The indictment of four white men, one of them a former member of the Alabama State Senate, on peonage conspiracy charges Friday focused attention anew on persistent attempts to perpetuate a practice long ago declared a violation of the U.S. Constitution. Sat. 9-21-46

The four men, who have been released on bonds of $1000 each, were charged with having removed and "kept in physical custody," Willie F. Will from Cordova, in Walker County, to Reform, Ala., last April.

The suspects are R. Bruce Doughty, a former State Senator and currently a nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives; Eddie L. Doughty, William Ambrose and James V. Sanders.

Under the indictment returned by the U.S. Grand Jury sitting here, the quartet was charged with having forcibly removed Will from Cordova to Reform, where he was kept in "physical custody" on the grounds that he owed R. Bruce Doughty some money.

**Chained at Night**

Will, the indictment charged, was told that he must "perform satisfactory labor" in order to pay the debt. He was chained in his cabin each evening after the day's work ended, witnesses said.

The Alabama case, following closely a similar indictment by a Federal Grand Jury in Georgia disclosed that State law enforcement officials are ignoring a U.S State Supreme Court decision declaring unconstitutional the "cheat and swindle" statutes adopted in 1903 by many Southern States under which men have been made to work out their debts.

District Attorney J. L. McCalla of Rockdale County, Ga., who issued the warrants under the old statute, forcing five men to "work out a debt" on the farm of 65-year-old Roswell P. Biggers, last week admitted his ignorance of the Supreme Court decision. Biggers is now under Federal indictment.

**Confesses Ignorance**

"I didn't know about that decision," McCalla confessed.

The State statute, ruled out in 1942, declares that "any person who shall contract to perform services of any kind with intent to procure money . . . and not to perform the service contracted . . . shall be deemed a common cheat and swindler and . . . punished as for a misdemeanor."

The Supreme Court declared this law unconstitutional in the case of Ira Taylor, who was convicted in Wilkinson County, Ga., under the statute. The Georgia Supreme Court had upheld Taylor's conviction. The Afro-American

In the opinion of one recognized legal authority, about half of the justices of peace in Georgia are unaware that the case ever reached the Supreme Court, while another legal light declared that it was generally known that the law was used widely throughout the State to obtain cheap farm labor. Baltimore, Md.

Under the law, a justice of the peace has authority to settle these cases for court costs if the person accused is willing to make cash settlement. Employers use the ruse of advancing money to prisoners to defray court expenses and then make them "work it out" on their farms or factories.

However, if the defendant is not willing to settle in justice court, he is given a hearing, which results either in in a dismissal of the case or its being held over for grand jury action in the superior court. Sat 9-21-46

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. —A Democratic nominee to ethe lower State House and a reform city policeman were among the four white men arrested by the federal authorities on charges of forcing [illegible] Doughty turned down $53 which he said that Wills owed him, telling him that the debt had increased to $110. Wills said that when he offered to pay the $110, it was refused Then he left the farm. Wills said that the white men came to Cardo va (Walker County, beat him and returned him to Doughty's farm in Reform (Pickens) county. 9-17-46

# 4 White Men Held For Forcing Negro To Work

Daily Worker Atlanta, Ga.

# Ragged, Jittery Character Claims He Escaped From Peonage On Miss. Farm

The Informer Houston Texas

Sat 9-6-46

HOUSTON—From a plantation somewhere near Durant, Mississippi where he claimed he had worked for six years in servitude, a bedraggled, dust-smudged, grimy and unshaven speciman of Negroid humanity, walked into the office of the Local branch of the NAACP where with a bewildered look in his blood shot eyes and jittery, he sought escape from. "My Cap'n." They told me to come here." he stammered, "said yo'll wouldn't let him get me."

He gave his name as Willie Perkins, 33 years old, and stated that he and a friend he called simply, 'Robert' had run away from the plantation, caught a freight train and finally arrived in Bay City, Texas where he caught a ride with a white man to Houston, Wednesday, March 27.

"Me and Robert, We work together on plantation," he explained. "They told us yo'll would make Cap'n pay us and wouldn't let him git us" he added. He said 'Cap'n' was the bossman on the plantation at whose orders he and Robert were made to call Captain, and added that he and his friend had never received pay for their work.

He said he got lost from Robert in Bay City and came to Houston because he had been told there that the NAACP would help him.

His story as told to Mrs. Lulu White, Mrs. C. V. Adair and the reporter, was incoherent and many of the details still remain vague. The one thing he seemed anxious to get over to his listeners, however, was he did not want his Captain to get him.

He appeared to have the understanding of a mere child of five or six and had to be spoken to in the simplest of terms in order to understand the questions, he was asked. His listeners managed to glean the following information by patient questioning:

He was born on the Hicks plantation somewhere in Mississippi and remained there until he went to work on the plantation from which he escaped. His parents died during the Influenza epidemic in 1918 and friends of the family took care of him. "I was born in 1912, I'm 33 years old,' he kept reciting as if he had been drilled. Continued on Back

from front

He and Robert had gone to work for the Captain six years ago. Their duties consisted of plowing, chopping cotton, cutting wood, cleaning out the barn-- "so the cows would have a clean place to stand--" sawing down trees and timber in the woods when not working in the fields.

On being asked what he had to eat on the plantation he said they were fed on the back porch of the 'big house' summer and winter and the food consisted of salt pork, cornbread and butter milk.

"We asked for molasses but Cap'n said he didn't have any," he stated. "We never got no cabbage or greens--we got plenty milk for breakfast, dinner and supper," he added.

He was asked next where he got clothes and answered that his boss gave them his old ones. Speaking so fast his words seemed to tumble over one another, he explained. "He give us his old underwear too, but it was the long kind and very raggedy. We didn't wear any underwear in the summer", he added.

He said he and Robert slept on a bed without sheets in a servant house back of the big house, and that the bed was the only piece of furniture in the hut. The two worked from "befo' breakfast till late at night. Cap'n would ride his horse over the field where we would be working, and curse us niggers and make us work faster. **..When we did not work as fast as he wanted us to he would jump down off his horse and beat us over the head with a stick," he showed scars on his head and body and said that a deep scar on his forehead was made when "Cap'n hit me with a stick." "Did he carry you to a doctor?" he was asked. He answered no and was then asked how the wound healed. "Jes grow-up," he stated.** Sat 4-6-46

He said they worked under guard every day for a period of time and was constantly warned not to try to run away. "Cap'n said he'd come git us." he said nervously, but added he and his friend took the chance to run away last Sunday when his boss, and family all left home.

" We lef' soon as they let", he ed up," he stated.

He appeared to be about five feet, ten inches tall, had well defined features, large eyes, with curley lashes. The skin on his face and on his sockless feet was caked with dirt scales. He had not had a bath in six years he had lived on the plantation, he explained. "Need one right now," he confided. When asked why, he said there was no tub. He was then asked if he couldn't have found a can that would hold water and he said he had looked for one but had not found one on the plantation. He and Robert washed their faces at a pump, he stated.

"Did you have towels?" he was asked. He answered "No, we didn't have no towels and no rags neither."

"Then how did you dry your faces?" was the next question. "We jes rub our han's over our face-" he demonstrated--"We leave 'em wet--jes rub our han's over 'em", he repeated.

He said they were not allowed to shave nor cut their hair. The hair on his head had grown down to his neck and his beard was all over his face and below his chin. the day he ran away, he stated.

"What about lice, were you bothered with them?" he was asked, and answered that he was. "How did you get rid of them?" his questioners wanted to know. Burn 'em up---I still got 'em" he scratched.

**Looking with quick glances and little jerks of the head at his audience, he appeared intermittingly suspicious and confident, but a peculiar smile as if of resignation played around his lips and his general attitude reminded one of a dog who wanted to be friends but who expected to be kicked at any minute.**

**He had** never been to school, could not count, not even money, and said he never **got** to go to church the whole **six** years he lived on the plantation. His father was a preacher "and he could read --because he **was** a preacher," he stated and **said** there had been eight children but seemed confused as to what had become of the others. "They **all** dead,' he finally said is if convincing himself of the fact for the first time.

He was asked if he had been in the armed forces and answered that he had never been registered.

The truth of this seemingly incredible story told by Perkins has not been ascertained and is pending further investigation by the local branch meanwhile the FBI was notified and an agent from that office picked the "runaway" up and carried him there for questioning. No statement from that office has been made in the case and it is not known yet what steps, if any will be taken by the FBI. In the meantime employment for the "escaped" man was secured in a place where he can be easily contacted by both offices.

## Worker Framed

The Courier

## Four Get Terms In Peonage Case

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Sat. 11-16-46

DALLAS, Tex.—Found guilty of violating the civil rights of R. D. Andrew by holding him without charge and forcing him to work on a Rockwall county landowner's farm, Sheriff W. I. Price and former Sheriff Jack Pullen were given one year prison terms and fined $1,000 each in Federal Court, here Friday.

Two others—Luther Hunter, Rockwall jailer, and William Frazier, Kaufman county constable—convicted of the same charge, were sentenced to six months in jail.

Norris Pierce, another defendant, was acquitted and dismissed from the case.

**TELLS OF STRIKING WORKER**

In addition to evidence that the defendants had forced Andrew to work on a farm against his wishes, one witness turned in an important piece of evidence for the State unexpectedly when he testified that Jack Pullen had struck the worker. The witness was James M. Crawford, white, who claimed he was Pullen's brother-in-law.

Crawford testified that he "guessed Pullen hit Andrew six or seven times" and then kicked him after he fell.

## More Violence Looms In Dixie

Defender

Chicago, Ill.

### Georgia Labor Draft Threatens Veterans

Sat. 2-24-46

DAWSON, Ga.—Chief of Police H. L. Lee this week made a bold lynch-inciting move here against returned Negro GIs, threatening to draft them now that the peanut and cotton harvesting season has opened.

Invoking the peonage laws of this state, Lee issued a circular which bluntly revealed the economic base of interracial clashes and lynchings. The circular read:

**NOTICE**

**Dawson, Ga., August 9, 1946**

**The City of Dawson for the past several months has not enforced vagrancy laws due to the fact that it was felt there was not sufficient jobs to keep everyone busy.**

**Now that there is a great demand for women and men in the harvesting of peanuts and cotton, there is no excuse for anyone not working.**

**Effectively IMMEDIATELY I am instructing my Police Department to arrest any one not working.**

**VAGRANCY or ABSENTEEISM will not be tolerated in Dawson as long as there is available work.**

**H. L. Lee, Chief of Police.**

Many returned Negro GIs are now receiving Federal unemployment income, which runs much higher than what they would obtain from the plantation owners.

It is felt that if the police attempt to impose their peonage system on the ex-soldiers they may meet with resistance.

A CIO member observed that while it is not uncommon for authorities to invoke such slave period regulations against Negroes during harvesting periods, it had dangers now if the authorities intended to go after GIs.

## Federal Jury Indicts Five For Peonage

The Defender

Chicago, Ill

Sat. 10-12-46

DALLAS — Forces of decency growing slowly in the South came to light again last week, when a federal grand jury here indicted five men, including three peace officers for holding R. D. Andrew, Negro, in peonage.

At the same time the grand jury returned true bills against two of the five for violating the civil rights of A. Lee Price, and Avalois Hannon.

**Sheriff, Jailer Named**

The first indictment names W. J. Price, Rockwell County sheriff; Luther Hunter, Rockwell County jailer; William Frazier, Kaufman County constable; Jack Pullen, former Rockwell County sheriff, and Norris Pierce, a farmer, defendants. According to the indictment, Andrew was arrested at Terrell, and then transferred to Rockwell. Later he was taken out of jail and forced to work out a $15 debt to Pullen. He had committed no offense, but was allegedly beaten on two occasions. The five were released on $5,000 bond each after the true bill was presented.

**Face Second Charge**

Sheriff Price and Pullen were again named as defendants in the second indictment. They are charged with arresting Price and Hannon in nearby Garland, without legal cause. The indictment states that they took the pair to Rockwell, where they beat them, and extracted a sum of money before releasing them.

Several witnesses from Rockwell and Kaufman Counties were summoned by the grand jury.

## Two Get Maximum Penalty

The Call

Kansas City, Mo.

Fri. 11-15-46

### Freed on Peonage Counts; Acquit Fifth Defendant

DALLAS, Texas.—Four of five men charged with holding R. D. Andrews, Rockwall Negro, in peonage were found guilty of violating the civil rights of a citizen, but were found innocent of three peonage counts.

Found guilty in Federal Judge T. W. Davidson's court on the count of violating civil rights were: W. J. Price, Rockwall County sheriff· Jack Pullen, ex-sheriff; William Frazier, Terrell constable; and Luther Hunter, Rockwall jailer.

Both Price and Pullen were given a year in prison and assessed $1,000 fine each, the maximum penalty. Hunter was given six months in jail and fined $500 and Frazier was given his choice of a $250 fine or six months in jail. He chose the fine.

The fifth defendant, Norris Pierce, Rockwall County farmer, was acquitted on all four counts in the indictment against him.

The offense for which the men were found guilty was the only misdemeanor in the four-count indictment. The other three counts, arresting to a condition of peonage, holding to peonage, and conspiracy of peonage, are felonies.

**Cautions Defendants**

Judge Davidson, in assessing punishment, cautioned the defendants against oppression of minorities. "The strong should not oppress the weak," he said. "The attitude of the Southern man toward the weaker race, the law has tried to define in this act."

A reluctant witness introduced by the prosecution in a surprise move during the trial testified that Pullen had struck the plaintiff, R. D. Andrews, during a visit to the jail. The witness was James M. Crawford, who said he and Pullen were married to sisters.

Following Crawford's testimony, Pullen took the stand in defense and related events leading up to Andrew's arrest. Andrews is said to have asked him for a loan of $35 before Christmas, 1945, in Terrell, with the promise to set out some onions for the money by the following Feb. 1.

"I told him I'd let him have $15," Pullen said. "Later when I went down to let him know I was ready for him to work, I couldn't find him. I decided to file a swindling charge against him."

He said he asked Constable Frazier to arrest Anderson, that he would file a charge later.

When Frazier picked Andrews up, Price authorized Pullen to bring the prisoner to Rockwall jail from Terrell.

Previously Andrews had admitted borrowing $15 from Pullen on the agreement to set out onions. He said, however, that Pullen wanted him to live on the farm, but that he was obligated to work for Crawford. As for the beatings, Andrews testified that at times Pullen used a rubber hose and once made him disrobe when the hose was used. Pierce also participated in the beatings and kickings, while Jailer Hunter would egg them on by saying "beat him some more" as he hadn't had enough.

**Hid In Barn**

Andrews did say, however, that Price had not struck him, but only offered the advice that he go to work for Pullen, who would secure his release. When he came out of jail, he went to the Pullen farm to cut posts, and stayed on the farm that night with another man. Later he crept off to the Crawford farm where he hid for four or five days in the barn.

He said he had been crippled as a result of the beatings and as soon as he was able to walk, hiked 13 miles at night to Terrell where his family lived. He later moved to Longview and remained there because he was afraid of Pullen and his life had been threatened.

In questioning Crawford, Asst. U. S. District Atty. Clyde G. Hood brought out the admission that Crawford would rather not tes

Pierce Biggers, Rockdale County farmer, denied in U. S. District Court today that he ever "struck, threatened to strike, slapped or otherwise abused" the 90 Negroes who worked on his property.

Accused of holding five Negro farmhands in peonage, Biggers said all his tenants received "good treatment, adequate pay, more meat than most folks got during rationing and a burying place — when they died on my place."

## Farmer Denies Abuse Of 90 Tenant Negroes

Atlanta, Ga.

ATLANTA, Nov. 27.— (AP) —

# Ga. Defies Law, Enslaves Negroes

Daily Worker New York, N.Y. Thurs. 8-29-46

ATLANTA, Aug. 28.—High sources in Georgia legal circles said tonight Negroes were arrested "all the time" under a 1903 Georgia "cheat and swindle" statute, although it was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court more than four years ago.

The statements followed the arrest by FBI agents of Roswell P. Biggers, 65, white farmer, on a charge of holding five Negro laborers in peonage on his 1,000-acre plantation near Conyers, Ga. Biggers was released under $4,000 bond pending action of a Federal grand jury.

Reporters at Conyers were not permitted to examine Rockdale county records bearing on the legal actions Biggers took against the Negroes which, the FBI charged, made them peons.

Superior court Judge James C. Davis, a candidate for Congress, said he knew of no law to force Rockdale county sheriff W. L. McCart to make the records public. The federal complaint alleges Biggers had the Negroes arrested on trumped-up charges of **"obtaining money under false pretenses"** and then **"bought them out"** to work the alleged debt on his farm.

Rockdale county attorney J. L. McCalla said he had not seen the warrants but the Negroes could have been arrested under the 1903 Georgia law which declares that **"any person who shall contract to perform services of any kind with intent to procure money and not to perform the service contracted for shall be deemed a common cheat and swindler and punished as for a misdemeanor."**

The U.S. Supreme Court held this law violated the Anti-Slavery clause of the Constitution. The opinion was handed down in the case of Ira Taylor, a Negro who was convicted in Wilkinson County, Ga., under the statute.

The Georgia Supreme Court had upheld the conviction, but was overruled. Thurs. 8-29-46

Under the usual operation of the law, a justice of the peace court has authority to "settle" any "cheat and swindle" cases for court costs if the person accused is willing to make cash settlement.

# Biggers Trial Continues In Federal Court

Daily World Atlanta, Ga. Thurs. 11-14-46

## Witnesses Describe Repeated Arrests To Work For Biggers

BY JOEL W. SMITH

The trial of Roswell Pierce Biggers, Rockdale County farmer, held on charge of peonage, countinued in the United States District Court Wednesday, with Prosecuting Assistant U. S. Attorney Harvey H. Tisinger and Douglas King presenting evidence which tended to show that the defendant had made a practice of having Negroes arrested on warrants and getting them out of jail, if they agreed to return to his plantation and work for him.

In cross-examining John T. New, Inspector of the City Sanitary Department, Attorney Hal Lindsay, chief defense counsel attempted to prove that J. C. Banks, the Government's first witness was lazy, shiftless and unreliable. Mr. New, to the contrary, testified that Mr. Banks was an exceptionally good worker and stated that his wages with the Sanitary Department was $33.60 per week, or about $5.60 per day.

**60c PER DAY**

Mr. Banks testified, Tuesday in 1943, he received 50c per day for his services as a laborer on Mr. Biggers' farm, and that in 1944 his pay was increased to 60c per day. He also stated that he was arrested twice by Atlanta detectives and returned to Conyers, Georgia by the Rockdale County sheriff to work on the Biggers farm.

One of the two warrants sworn out before a justice of peace at Conyers was allegedly signed with a cross-mark by Sam Banks, father of J. C. Banks. Mr. Banks took the witness stand, Wednesday, and testified that Mr. Biggers came to him to make an agreement to send for his son (J. C. Banks), but emphatically denied having made a cross-mark or signed a warrant for his arrest.

During the cross-examination, Mr. Banks not only denied touching the pen or making a cross-mark, but said that he did not know that his son was in jail, until Mr. Biggers came to the cotton field and told him. Mr. Banks also testified that Mr. Biggers had been considerate in providing medical care for him during his illnesses, but explained that at the time of the final settlement expenses for medical services were charged against him and deducted.

**ARRESTED SIX TIMES**

The next Government witness to take the stand was Booker T Johnson, who told the court that he had been arrested six times, and on three occassions returned to the Biggers' plantation. He testified that in 1945, he had a good crop and settled up with Mr. Biggers and got a receipt in full for the year.

Mr. Johnson explained that in May 1946, he was arrested and returned to Rockdale County, and added that his boss at a feed company went to Conyers and paid $77.90 to get him out. He told Attorney Tisinger that he was not presented a warrent and that when he asked the arresting officers why they were locking him up, they said that they did not know.

Copies of the warrants were presented as evidence in the trial. They were sworn out by Mr. Biggers before the justice of peace at Conyers, charging Mr. Johnson with misdemeanors, and securing money under false pretense. Mr. Johnson testified that in May, 1944, he was arrested and transferred to Conyers and was confined in jail for six of seven days. He also indicated that on one occasion, he went to Conyers to visit his relatives, and that on his way back, Mr. Biggers took him by one of his barns, and the sheriff turned up and locked him up. Thurs. 11-14-46

Daily World Atlanta, Ga.

Augusta, Ga. Herald Aug. 29 1946

# PEONAGE CHARGE FACES GEORGIAN

ATLANTA, Ga., Aug. 28—(UP)—Rockdale county officials today found it hard to believe that burley Roswell P. Biggers, "who had done so much for Negroes," could be charged with peonage by the FBI.

Biggers, prominent 63-year-old planter and livestock dealer, is charged with securing the release of five Negro farm hands from the Conyers, Ga., jail and holding them as forced laborers on his rambling 1,000-acre corn and cotton plantation.

"I have known Mr. Biggers for 30 years," County Sheriff H. L. McCart said last night. "He is a fine man."

He said he didn't understand "a man who had done so much for Negroes being charged with such a crime."

McCart said "Biggers works more Negroes than any other man in Rockdale county."

Harvey H. Tysinger, Atlanta, assistant U. S. attorney, said Biggers obtained approximately a dozen warrants against the Negroes, charging them with "getting money under false pretenses."

The Negroes, arrested by McCart, were jailed and subsequently "turned over to Biggers to work on his farm", Tysinger said.

He said one of the Negroes allegedly owed Biggers two dollars. He said the Negro came to Atlanta, obtained a job, and sent Biggers a two dollar money order. He said Biggers refused to accept the order and obtained a warrant against the Negro.

# Peonage Trial Hearings Wind Into Second Week

Daily World Atlanta, Ga. Thurs. 11-21-46

By JOEL W. SMITH

After clarifying a few points regarding a money order mailed to Roswell P. Biggers, Rockdale County farmer charged with peonage, by one of his former Negro farmhands, the Government rested and the defense called one witness to the stand, Tuesday, in the United States District Court.

Federal Judge E. Marvin Underwood is presiding over the trial which is now in the second week.

To clear up, what appeared to be conflicting testimony about the money order. Assistant U. S. Attorney Harvey H. Tisinger and Douglas King showed Tuesday that while Banks misquoted the figures, he was confused and gave the facts as well as he could remember them. According to the testimony, J. C. Banks mailed Mr. Biggers a money order for $2.00 in repayment of a debt, which was returned uncashed. Last weekend, Banks testified that when the money order was returned, he did not get $2.00 back, but rather around $1.60.

**WITNESS CONFUSED**

Prosecuting Assistant Tisinger showed Tuesday that while Banks misquoted the figures, he was confused and gave the facts as well as he could remember them. According to the testimony, the $2.00 money order was returned, but when the fees were deducted, Banks actually received $1.87.

Defense counsel Hal Lindsey argued at length regarding the ad-

# GEORGIA'S SLAVE FARM

Defender Chicago, Ill.

While racial tension is growing in intensity, something else is also happening in the South. That something else provides a ray of light to those who have lost all hope for moral redemption of Dixie. It is an awareness of moral wrongs among a small but highly articulate white group.

Last week the U. S. Court indicted in Atlanta, a 65-year-old plantation owner who had held five Negroes as peons. Roswell Biggers, the owner of a 3,000 acre plantation, was arrested by FBI agents and charged with violating the Involuntary Slavery and Servitude Clause of the U. S. Criminal Court. He was indicted and released under a $4,000 bond, pending his trial in October. Sat. 9-14-46

According to Assistant U. S. District Attorney H. H. Tysinger, the plantation owner used an old time trick. He had these five Negroes arrested on trumped up charges of obtaining money under false pretenses. Then "buying up" their warrants, he returned them to his farm where they were to work off the debt. After they were jailed, he paid their fines and cost of lodging and obtained their release to him. Of course being under-paid it was not possible for them to liquidate the supposed obligation. So their choice was either that they must remain in a permanent slavery or return to jail. Not a happy one in either case.

Biggers gave no receipts so that men released to him never knew when their debts were paid. One of the men who allegedly owed him $2.00, left the farm and went to Atlanta where he obtained a job. He sent a money order to cover this obligation but Biggers sent the money back and later arranged for this man's arrest. After the man had worked several weeks, he inquired if his debt was paid. He was told that it had increased to $12.00 to cover the expense incurred in the trip to Atlanta to bring him back to the plantation. With the exception of a few minor details and the locale this could easily be a chapter out of Richard Wright's "Native Son." Biggers had faced a similar trial in 1916. He was indicted but was acquitted after a mistrial. We hope justice this time will take its true course. The hopeful aspect of the case is that enlightened and determined whites, though small in number, are helping the prosecution of Biggers.

# Wasn't Forced To Work, Says Peonage Witness

The Constitution Atlanta, Ga. Fri. 11-15-46

missability of certified jail records as evidence. Judge Underwood ruled that these documents be excluded.

**DEFENSE OPENS**

Before Wednesday's session officially opened, the defendant, Mr. Biggers went into a huddle with eight or nine of his colored farmhands outside of the court room. When the hearings got underway, Defense counsel Hal Lindsay called Ike Keeley, a share-cropper to the witness stand.

While Keeley stated that he knew absolutely nothing about Mr. Biggers' policy of having farmhands arrested on charges of securing money "under false pretense" in order to get them to return to his plantation, he testified that the Government's witnesses, J. C. Banks, Lester Banks, Felmon Jackson, Booker T. Johnson and Bobby Glenn alias Bobby Rakestraw had bad reputations and asserted that he would not believe them under oath.

He further stated that he had never been forced to work for Mr Biggers and that he would leave the plantation when he got ready and was never arrested. Keeley said he lived off in the swamps, and as far as he knew, Mr. Biggers and "Miss Jewel" (Mrs. Biggers) treated everybody right.

**DISCUSS DOCUMENTS AGAIN**

The question of the admissability of the jail records from Rockdale County was re-opened, Wednesday, and U. S. Attorney M. Neil Andrews revealed that an effort had been made to get Judge Jas. C. Davis to certify the documents, but informed the court that the Rockdale County judge declined to do so, on the grounds that he did not know the signature of the arresting officers.

Attorney Andrews pointed out that the Federal Government could not force Judge Davis to certify the records, but pointed out that the Commissioner of Roads and Revenue and the clerk in his office had certifide the documents

# Jury Clears Biggers Of Peonage Charges

The Constitution Atlanta, Ga.
Wed. 12-4-46

Roswell Pierce Biggers, 65-year-old Conyers landowner, was cleared of peonage charges in U. S. District Court here yesterday by a jury which, after less than an hour's deliberation, announced a verdict of "not guilty."

Biggers had been on trial for more than three weeks here on charges of holding five Negro farmhands in virtual slavery on his 3,000-acre Rockdale County farm. The wealthy farmer-businessman was arrested by FBI agents on his farm after complaints were made by the Negroes that Biggers had them arrested on misdemeanor charges, "bought" their release from jail, and then held them on his land to work out small debts.

The jury was charged by Federal Judge E. Marvin Underwood shortly after 1 p. m., after hearing final arguments by U. S. Atty. M. Neil Andrews, government prosecutor, and Defense Counsel Hal Lindsay. At 2 p. m. the jurors went out to lunch, and Court was recessed until 3 p. m. Immediately on resumption of Court, the verdict was announced by Foreman W. R. Simpson.

Biggers, who frequently had mentioned throughout the trial as being "hard of hearing,' received the verdict through his wife, who, sitting beside him, repeated the foreman's words in a whisper.

him in the Conyers jail that, "if I agreed to pick that cotton he'd get me out." He picked cotton two weeks and returned to Atlanta, where he was later rearrested.

An attempt by defense attorneys upon cross-examination to show that the witness was lazy, shiftless and unreliable, failed when John T. New, sanitary inspector testified that Banks was an exceptionally good worker who earned $33.60 per week, or about $4.60 per day.

# Georgia's Peonage Racket Thrives on Poor Felons

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.
Sat. 11-23-46

ATLANTA—(ANP) — Prosecution of Roswell Pierce Biggers, charged with peonage, started in the Federal District Court here last week with presentation of testimony by several colored men who asserted Bigger systematically paid them out of jail, then worked them for nothing on his plantation near Conyers, Ga.

The trial began on Nov. 12 with Assistant U.S. Attorney Harvey H. Tsinger and Douglas King presenting evidence which showed that Biggers made it a practice of having the men arrested on warrants, and getting them out of jail if they agreed to return and work on his plantation.

First witness for the prosecution was J. C. Banks, 22, who told the court he worked for Biggers in 1943 at a rate of 50 cents a day and got a raise of 10 cents a day, or 60 cents, in 1944.

**Exceptional Worker**

He described how he left the plantation and came to Atlanta to work with the city sanitary department. After a short time, he was picked up by city detectives and detained at the Atlanta police station until the Rockdale sheriff came for him.

Every time Biggers came for him, Banks said, the planter told

# Georgia Farmer Faces New Peonage Charges

Courier-Journal
Louisville, Ky.

Atlanta, Aug. 27 (UP)—A 65-year-old farmer was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation today on a charge of holding five Negroes in peonage on his 1,000-acre farm near Atlanta.

Henry King, acting agent in charge of the Atlanta F.B.I. office, said the farmer, Roswell Pierce Biggers, was released on $4,000 bond after a hearing before U. S. Commissioner David J. Meyerhardt. Biggers will face a federal grand jury in U. S. District Court here in October.

**Indicted 30 Years Ago.**

The complaint filed with Meyerhardt charged Biggers specifically with "unlawfully causing Booker T. Johnson (one of the Negroes) to be arrested and returned to a condition of peonage" about May 30.

In Washington, the Justice Department said four other Negroes were involved. Their names, as reported by King, were Bobby Rakestraw, Felmon Jackson, Lester Banks and J. C. Banks.

According to the Justice Department, it was the second time Biggers had been charged with peonage. He first was indicted in 1916, but his hearing ended in a mistrial and he was acquitted later.

Wed 8-28-41

The complaint charged Biggers had arranged a dozen warrants against the five Negroes, charging them with obtaining money under false pretense. In each case, the Justice Department said, the Negroes were held in Rockdale County jail at Conyers, Ga., for a short time and then turned over to Biggers to "work out their fines" on his farm.

Rockdale County is due east of Atlanta, and adjoins Walton County, in which four Negroes were lynched recently.

# Rich Rockdale Planter Absolved Of All Wrong In Peonage Trial Here

Daily World
Atlanta, Ga.
Wed. 12-4-46

BY JOEL W. SMITH

After listening to testimony for three weeks and two days, an all-white jury deliberated less than an hour and a half and returned a verdict of "not guilty" against Roswell P. Biggers, wealthy Rockdale County farmer charged with peonage, Tuesday afternoon in United States District Court. Federal Judge E. Marvin Underwood presided over the lengthy trial.

In charging the jury, Judge Underwood explained that the defendant was indicted on 19 separate counts for violating the Peonage Abolition Act, which makes it a Federal offense to return individuals to peonage for a debt, pointing out that the amount of the debt was not important.

**JUDGE THE FACTS**

Judge Underwood made it clear that he would give instructions as to the law, but the jury would be the sole of the facts. He charged the jury to take the law and apply it to the evidence, including the documents and oral testimony.

The final argument for the Government was made by U. S. District Attorney M. Neil Andrews, who stated that it was a bad practice to put young boys in jail whether they are colored or white and emphasized the fact that Georgia was founded by people who did not believe in putting people in jail for debts.

**LONG ARM OF THE LAW**

Referring to the money order which Mr. Biggers admitted returning to J. C. Banks, District Attorney Andrews asserted: "He wasn't interested in the money. He wanted the boys back." He also explained that it was not necessary for Mr. Biggers to stand over the five Negroes allegedly held in peonage and force them to work, as long as he had the "long arm of the law" to reach to Atlanta and Decatur and return them to Conyers. "All he lacked was a bloodhound," Attorney Andrews stated.

12-4-46

Mr. Biggers was arrested by FBI agents in August and was released on $4,000 bond. The five Negroes allegedly held in involuntary servitude were: J. C. Banks, Lester Banks. Felmon Jackson, Booker T Johnson and Bobby Glenn, alias Bobby Rakestraw.

# Federal Jury Frees Planter Of Peonage

The Defender
Chicago, Ill.
Sat. 12-14-46

## Georgian Cleared Second Time In 7 Years Of Charges

By JOHN LeFLORE
(Defender Staff Correspondent)

ATLANTA, Ga.—For the second time in the past seven years Roswell Pierce Biggers, white, wealthy landowner of Rockdale County, Georgia, has deftly won acquittal on peonage charges.

An all-white jury in the federal district court here last Tuesday declared him not guilty of holding five Negroes in involuntary servitude. The jury deliberated less than an hour and a half.

The trial proceedings required three weeks and two days.

Biggers was arrested by FBI agents on Aug. 27 as a result of their investigation of the circumstances of his having held Bobby Glenn, also known as Bobby Rakestraw, Lester Banks, J. C. Banks, and Felmon Jackson, Booker T. Johnson and Biggers' Negroes in his behalf. Several of the Negroes told the jury that they were held in involuntary servitude of ill repute who subsequently returned to the Biggers farm and a Negro minister of the community were the principal wit-

In what seemed to have been an agreement between law enforcement officers at Conyers and Biggers, the five Negroes were charged with "getting money under false pretenses" from the feudal lord. After their arrests they were paid 50 cents to a dollar-a-day by Biggers' farm, and assessed usurious rates of interest and special fees, which along with the alleged principal of the debts would run up to staggering sums against the poorly believed under oath. Biggers was arrested about six years ago on a peonage charge and pastor declared that Biggers was a good white man." The government's case was presented by Harvey H. Tysinger, assistant United States district attorney. Biggers was arrested by FBI agents on Aug. 27, he was released on $4,000 bond. His 3000-acre farm is said to be the largest in Rockdale County. It is located near Conyers, the county seat.

Chicago, Ill.
Jan. 13-14-46

While Attorney Andrews was discussing the system use in disposing of warrants and keeping records in Rockdale County, Sheriff McCart said: "the people elect me and the Grand Jury and the solicitor check me, and they seem to be satisfied."

**BIGGERS TESTIFIES**

Daily World

Roswell P. Biggers, Rockdale County farmer on trial for peonage took the witness stand on his own behalf, Tuesday, in the United States District Court

Atlanta, Ga.

Before going into the charges specified in the indictments, Defense Attorney Hal Lindsey questiond Mr. Biggers on general conditions on his large plantation of 1,805 acres. Wed. 11-27-46

Mr. Biggers testifid that he had 21 houses for tenants and sharecroppers and explained that they were in a good repair. He also stated that arrangements were made for medical care, and in some cases, he assumed responsibility for burial expenses.

**UNAWARE OF LAWS**

Attorney Lindsey questioned Mr. Biggers at length concerning a warrant he swore out for the arrest of Felmon Jackson in May 1946. Mr. Biggers was first asked how far he went in school, and the answer was: "fifth grade." Then he was asked if he knew anything about the laws regarding payments of debts, and the answer was in the negative.

He testified that Felmon Jackson worked for him around 15 years, and left in December, 1945 to work in Atlanta for $30 per week. Mr. Biggers said he was paying him $12, and furnishing housing, fuel and meals. Then he said, Jackson returned voluntarily but later left again, after borrowing $25.

According to Mr. Biggers' testimony, Jackson and his wife returned to the plantation and worked for him, but stated that he never collected the debt. He admitted however, that Jackson's wife repaid $27 on a joint loan of $30.
toweekcovhowd

After airing the relations between Mr. Biggers and Jackson Attorney Lindsey asked about Bobby Glenn, alias Bobby Rakestraw, another one of the former farmhands on the Biggers' plantation. Mr. Biggers testified he paid a fine of $40 imposed by Judge Jas C. Davis on a theft charge to get Glenn out of jail at th request of his aunt, and stated that he never got any of this money back.

Also appearing on the witness stand, Tuesday, weer Sheriff McCart, C. J Hicks, superintendent of schools; and G. C. Sims, president of the bank of Conyers. Mr. Sims told the Federal jury that that Mr Biggers had a reputation of paying the prevailing wages, and indicated that he did not know anything about the defendants' practice of swearing out warrants to force workers to return to his plantation

## Good Will Toward Negroes

The News and Courier

This morning, this Christmas morning, The News and Courier declares its good will toward the Southern negroes, especially toward those in South Carolina, and offers them advice.

Charleston, S. C.

They should and they can have economic independence. They should buy land. They should build homes. For what they buy they should pay as soon as possible lest when another depression shall come mortgages will be foreclosed. Wed. 12-25-46

The News and Courier tells the colored people that the mechanization of staple crop production, of cotton in particular, is a threat to them. It will force their continued migration if they don't look out.

The farmer, thrifty, intelligent, willing to work, always can earn a livelihood, on 50 acres or less. It has been proved thousands of times. He can have his cows, his hogs, his poultry, his garden, his orchard.

Land is abundant in South Carolina. Negroes who neglect to own some of it may, probably will, find that they will have to get out of the South. The going is easy. So is the coming.

The coming into South Carolina of large numbers of white immigrants The News and Courier confidently expects, and that soon. With them the negroes will have to compete. They had better get land now or they will never get it.

As for those who are discontented and would prefer to live elsewhere, the highways of land and water and air are open.

# GI's Wife Narrates Tale of Mississippi Peonage

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.
Sat. 10-5-46

## Forced to Be Mistress of Roxie Farmer for 15 Months, 19-Year-Old Fugitive Says

NEW ORLEANS — Mississippi peonage again attracted national attention last week when an unbelievable story of enslavement and compulsory cohabitation imposed by a white man on the 19-year-old wife of a colored service man at Roxie, for 15 months, was told NAACP officials here.

The victim of what was termed a local NAACP Executive Secretary Daniel E. Byrd as "a peonage plot" was Mrs. Edna Mae Cole Burnette, wife of Pvt. George E. Burnette, presently stationed at the General Hospital, Augusta, Ga.

She escaped to New Orleans, Mrs. Burnette said, by pretending she wished to visit her husband's relatives in Florida.

**Held in Servitude**

Examined by young women employees at the local NAACP office, Mrs. Burnette's thighs and body were found to be covered with bruises. She sobbed out the following incredible story:

"I began working as cook and housekeeper for George Eames in Roxie, Miss., and my husband, who ran away from the Army after a riot in Centerville, Miss., worked on a log truck for Henry Smith and also around Eames's store.

"The FBI picked up my husband for being AWOL and took him back to the Army. I had no place to move, so I remained in the house.

"When my husband was taken, we owed George Eames a grocery bill of $67. I continued working for Eames and his 9-year-old son. He forced me to work every day and did not pay me.

**Criminally Assaulted**

"He is a widower and demanded that I submit to him because of the bill we owed him. I refused; but he beat me, locked the doors and assaulted me and told me if I ever tried to run away he would kill me.

"He watched me all the time. I often wanted to kill him. At least once each week he would beat me with a stick, the last beating was on July 15, 1946. I tried to escape several times but was beaten each time he found out."

At last, on Sept. 13, Mrs. Burnette said, she persuaded Eames to let her go to Florida to visit her husband's people. He told her, she said, that she had better return in two weeks. She came immediately to New Orleans, she said.

Mrs. Burnette asserts that she has some of the allotment money from her husband in a Mississippi bank, but is afraid she'll be killed if she ever returns to that section.

The New Orleans branch NAACP has referred the matter to the national office for action.

# Grand Jury Indict 5 For Peonage

The Whip Miami, Fla.
Sat. 10-12-46

## Two For Violation Of Civil Rights

DALLAS — (ANP)—Three peace officers,, a former peace officer and a farmer were named in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury here last Friday, growing out of charges off holding R. D. Andrew, a Negro in involuntary servitude. At the same time the grand jujry returned tru bills against two others for alleged violation of the civil rights of a Negro man and woman, A. Lee Price and Avalois Hannon.

The first indictment names W. J. Price, Rockwell county sheriff, jailar; William Frazier, constable Luther Hunter, Rockwell county of Kaufman county precinct 3 (Terrell); Jack Pullen, former Rockwall county sheriff, and Norris Pierce, Rockwell county farmer, as defendants, while the second names Sheriff Price and John Pullen, a deputy.

According to the bill, Andrew was arrested and placed in jail at Terrell, later transferred Rockwall, and still late taken out to work for the benefit of others, although he had committed no offense. The indictment also states that Andrew was beaten on two occasions.

In the second indictment, the defendants are chargegd with arresting Price and Hannon in Garland "without legal cause" and taking them to Rockwall where they were beaten and released only upon payment of a sum of money to the defendants.

The Grand Jury summoned a large number of witnesses from Rockwall and Kaufman counties during its investigation of the two cases.

# Was Accused of Making 5 Men Work Out Fines

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.

## Sheriff Admits Failure to Read Warrants, Turning Over Defendants Without Trials

Sat. 12-14-46

ATLANTA (ANP)—The three and a half week trial of Roswell P. Biggers, wealthy white Rockdale County farmer, accused of holding five men in involuntary servitude, ended here last week with his exoneration.

Indicted on 19 separate counts of violating the Peonage Abolition Act, Biggers was arrested by FBI agents in August and released on $4,000 bond.

**Responsible for Warrants**

The indictments charged specifically that the white planter operated his peonage system by preferring misdemeanor charges against tenants and getting them out of jail on their promise to work out the fines.

The five against whom he was accused of having employed the system were J. C. Banks, Lester Banks, Felmon Jackson, Booker T. Jackson and Bobby Glenn, alias Bobby Rakestraw.

During the trial before Judge E. Marvin Underwood, prosecutors could get little more than "I don't remember" and "I don't know" out of Biggers and Sheriff W. L. McCart in their two-day appearances on the witness stand.

**Sheriff Implies Guilt**

In spite of his effort to evade questions, Sheriff McCart's testimony had appeared damaging in that it tended to establish the fact that the planter made it a policy to swear out warrants and have his farmhands arrested in order to force them to return to his plantation and work for him.

Asked by U.S. Attorney Andrews about the arrest of Johnson, Sheriff McCart said, "I don't remember. I don't know whether he stole a mule, a cow or some money." He indicated that in most instances, he did not read the warrants.

**Not Clear on Subject**

Regarding his disposition of the warrant for Johnson, the sheriff said, "It was settled by somebody I don't know who that somebody was. I don't remember."

He did remember later accepting a check for $77.90 from the employer of Johnson in final settlement for a warrant for his arrest in May, 1946. The sheriff stated that $65 of this amount was for Mr. Biggers, while $12.90 covered the cost of arrest, turnkey fee and board.

Mr. Andrews asked the sheriff about the disposition of the warrant, pointing out that according to the notations, Johnson could be arrested at any time on the same warrant.

The sheriff refused to give any definite answer concerning any of the other nine cases in which warrants had been issued and the persons never brought to trail on Biggers's charges.

**No Trial—Just Turned Over**

Cross examination showed that in January, 1945, McCart arrested one of Biggers's farmhands and turned him over to the planter immediately on his return to Conyers.

On another occasion it was revealed, J. B. Moore, a farmhand, took out a warrant for the arrest of Lester Banks, in connection with the heft, and McCart deputized Biggers to pick him up.

In his testimony to the jury, Biggers contended that he had 12 houses for tenants on his 1805-acre plantation and that they were in good repair and his tenants well cared for.

# Rich Planter's Trial Goes Into Third Week

Daily World Atlanta, Ga. Wed. 11-27-46

BY JOEL W. SMITH

The trial of Roswell P. Biggers, wealthy Rockdale County farmer charged with peonage entered the third week in United District Court on Monday, with U. S. Attorney Phil Andrews subjecting Sheriff W. L. McCart to a lengthy cross-examination.

In spite of his effort to evade the questions by saying, "I don't know" or "I don't remember," Sheriff McCart testimony was damaging in that it definitely established the fact that Mr. Biggers had made it a policy to swear out warrants and have five of his farmhands arrested in order to force them to return to his plantation and work for him

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In his testimony to the jury, Biggers contended that he had 12 houses for tenants on his 1805-acre plantation and that they were in good repair and his tenants well cared for.

S. Attorney Andrews questioned Sheriff McCart about specific warrants, the charges listed in the warrants and the final disposition of the warrants. When asked about the warrant sworn out by Mr. Biggers for the arrest of Booker T. Johnson, Sheriff McCart said, "I don't remember. I don't know whether he stole a mule, a cow or some money." He indicated that in most instances, he did not read the warrants.

Regarding the disposition of this warrant, he said: "It was settled by somebody. I don't know who that somebody was. I don't remember."

Asked about Mr. Biggers' signature on the warrant, Sheriff McCart insisted that it was put on the warrant when it was issued, rather than when it was settled.

Andrews said: "I'll ask you to answer it."

**WITHOUT**

It is manifest

At one stage of the cross-examination, Judge E. Marvin Underwood told Sheriff McCart to answer the questions yes or no, and then go in to the explanation.

As the cross-examination continued, Attorney Andrews used the same time requested Attorney to show that Lester Banks had to break the question and make them simple.

Still there was no direct answer, so Attorney Andrews asked: "I'll ask you if in any of the nine cases which warrants had been issued another occasion, J. B. Moore, a farmhand took out a warrant for the arrest of Lester Banks, in connection with a theft, and Sheriff McCart deputized Mr. Biggers to pick him up.

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# Demands $5.00 A Day For Cotton Choppers

To Memphis Wash'd
Memphis, Tenn

A demand for $5 per day for chopping cotton has been raised by the National Farm Labor Union, it was revealed in Memphis today.

H. L. Mitchell, President of the union, announced that 50,000 circulars bearing the union's demand for $5 for 10 hours work, were distributed in the plantation areas of Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi and Alabama by Monday, June 3.

The union circulars advised all farm labor - cotton choppers and day hands, not to work for less than a living wage. According to Mitchell, rates being paid to cotton choppers range from $1 per day to $4.50 in the Delta plantation area.

Th circulars stated that "There is a shortage of labor on the farms Now is the time to get a fair day's work." Notice was also given that any farmer wanting to hire labor at the union wage rate of $5 a day, would be supplied wtih good workers. 6-4-46

The circulars were published and distributed by the District Councils of the National Farm Labor Union. Memphis Wash'd

Mitchell said that rumors had spread throughout the plantation country that the circulars were being distributed by a man in an airplane. However, the rumors did not state how the handbills happened to be tacked on telephone poles, fences and barns, nor how they were carefully placed on the porches of plantation owners.

## How Peonage Is Prevented

The News and Courier Charleston, S.C. Thur. 9-5-46

When 60 hands on a cotton plantation, in South Carolina, all colored men, formed a labor union, with the object of improving living and dying conditions, they passed a resolution that a committee be appointed to authorize and request the employing planter to take out of their weekly pay 50 cents and give it to the president of the union. Thus the dues of the members would be regularly paid and the fund for funeral expenses and other benefits would be maintained. This was an independent union, in no way connected with the C. I. O. or the A. F. of L. The committee told the planter that, when the men were paid off Saturdays, eight or 10 of them "blew in" their wages before Monday morning and before the dues to the union could be collected. The planter wished to have good relations with his labor, indeed he had their faithful service, and was disposed to grant the request of the union. About that time his lawyer happened to hear of the proposal, and he advised the planter to be careful, that if he checked off any 50 cents from the wages of a colored hand he would most assuredly be prosecuted in the federal court. To this time, the incident, or incompleted transaction, here described has not occurred. It might. The planter has a capable lawyer who has made a study of the statutes forbidding peonage. Laws against peonage are applicable, we suspect, only in Southern states. White laborers appear to be exempt from laws relating to peonage.

# SOUTHERN FARM UNIONS ORGANIZE IN SECRET

The Chronicle Detroit, Mich. Sat. 10-26-46

By VICTOR RIESEL
(Reprinted From the New York Post)

PINE BLUFF, Ark.—I've seen their lean faces. I've heard their melancholy songs—and prayers with which these sharecroppers, tenant farmers and day hands open and close their new-found union meetings. I've seen their children playing in the roadside dust with oil cans and bottle tops for toys. And I've seen these youngsters sleep for hours on wooden benches at some union session in weather-beaten, back country churches.

**I've talked with their ministers, young crusaders in overalls and woolen shirts—some of whom came with their young wives from comfortable Northern homes to work among the migrant cotton and fruit pickers here who earn less than $6 a week over the year.**

* * *

Ever since I crossed the Mississippi river at Cairo, Ill., and drove hundreds of miles through the cotton country in southeast Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi, I've seen the poorest, hungriest workers living in the most miserable hovels—only the best of which have a decent privy—on the nation's richest soil.

I've driven hundreds of miles over dusty back roads, over rickety wooden bridges marked "condemned" and through sharecropper patches so far from schools the kids must walk five miles for a bus every day.

I've seen restlessness everywhere—and a new kind of unionism sprouting up under the careful organizing work of the AFL's new National Farm Labor Union. This union is anti-Communist and sensible—something for which the big plantation owners and business men down here should be thankful. There are 3,000,000 farm workers waiting to be unionized. They're all pent up. If some money-hungry racketeers; or some power-seeking rabble rouser; or Communists eager for proletarian violence took control here much blood would be shed some day.

* * *

**And so the new Farm Labor Union—which I came down to watch swing into action—is cautious. Many regular local meetings are held secretly. They must be or the suspicious tenant farmers and day hands just won't come out. These sessions are held at night in square, unpainted frame buildings which house the country churches. This secrecy also gives the simple farm workers, who do so little in their leisure time, a sense of belonging to some secret lodge and social club. All union meetings have the usual rigamorole of a secret society up North.**

A sentinel is posted at the approach to the church, an inner guard is at the door to take the pass word which recently has been "Union Is Marching."

At the secret union sessions I noticed that there were peculiar pressures on my fingers and wrists when I shook hands that, I was told, was the union handshake used so men in the fields and in town on Saturday would know who was a union member.

* * *

**Leading this new union are three men who reflect their outfit more than any other labor leaders I've known. A shy Will Rogers sort of chap, H. L. Mitchell, once a Tyronza, Ark., village tailor and town "radical," is president.**

**Elderly F. R. Betton, for 23 years the only Negro Justice of the Peace in Arkansas, is vice president.**

And personifying the new vitality being pumped into the farm labor outfit is a dynamic Texas captain, Capt. Barney Taylor, organization director. A Nazi shell got Taylor in Normandy, shortly after the invasion. It blinded his right eye, deafened his right ear and injured his right leg. For extraordinary heroism he was given the Distinguished Service Cross.

These three men today have taken on a heartbreaking job. But potentially theirs is the nation's biggest union.

# $2 Wage For Miss. Cotton Choppers Hit

Chicago Defender
Chicago, Ill.

NEW YORK—Wage ceilings of $2 a day, with unlimited hours for Mississippi cotton choppers, were under fire this week by the Workers' Defense League.

Backing the stand of the National Farm Labor Union, the WDL urged Secretary of Agriculture Clinton P. Anderson to oppose wage ceilings for underpaid Mississippi cotton choppers.

Sat. 6-1-46

"With other workers throughout the nation struggling for and winning wage increase to meet the present high living costs, it seems shameful to freeze the already substandard wages of cotton choppers," wrote Morris Milgram, WDL national secretary, to Anderson.

Wage ceilings of $2 and $2.50 a day, with unlimited hours, were proposed by planters at hearings held by the Department of Agriculture's wage board in Mississippi and a referendum among the planters on those two proposed ceilings is set for April 2.

Constitution Staff Photo—Pete Rotor

ON THE SONG FRONT—They're chopping cotton again here in the Georgia cotton belt; chopping dat cotton from sun up till sun down, and their hearts are full of song. You see only women and children in the fields. The men are about more lucrative work.

# Mark Ethridge Blasts South for Unfair Economic Policy

The Afro-American Baltimore, Md.
Sat. 10-12-46

MERIDIAN, Miss.—(ANP)—The view that the South cannot exist on low wages and the economic subjection of a race was taken by Mark Ethridge, white publisher of the Louisville Courier-Journal and Louisville Times, in an address before the Executives' Club here Sept. 28.

Declaring that much of the South's natural resources have been wasted, and most of its population has migrated to other sections because of better economic opportunities, he declared that the South must recognize that her cotton market in the old sense is gone forever and must adjust herself to a new economy.

He called recent Mississippi and Georgia elections "the lowest form of demagogery and cowardice, in that they were pitched upon the basis of human minority." He said the South will never have a real democracy while she denies half her population the franchise through the poll tax and "white supremacy."

# Wake County Farm Families Earn More Than $7,000 In Sideline Market Sales

Norfolk, Va.
Journal & Guide

RALEIGH, N. C. — Negro farm families in eight Negro Wake county communities have added $7,055.92 to their regular farm income through sideline market sales of meat, milk, chickens, eggs, butter, vegetables, and flowers, the sales being made on available markets in the city of Raleigh. Aside from the sideline market sales, farmers are still engaged in the production of tobacco, cotton and other major farm crops.

The demonstration was conducted over a 12 months period, beginning January, 1945 and lasting thru December, 1945. Value of the products sold show: vegetables, $3,244.86; chickens, $1,545.09; eggs, $789.19; butter, $554.50; meat, $315.19; milk, $215.10; flowers and other, $391.99. This gives each of the eight communities a total income of $881.99 or a monthly income of $587.99 over a 12 months period.

Sat 4-27-46

According to W. C. Davenport of the State College extension service, many Negro farm families in Wake county are fast becoming a part of sideline market sales to supplement their farm income come from cash crops.

# Cotton pickers to get higher wages, less cotton

The Tribune
Los Angeles, Calif.
Sat. 9-21-46

WASHINGTON—The U. S. Department of Agriculture has announced maximum wage rates for cotton picking in 19 counties in the Delta area of Mississippi. The rate is $2.60 per hundred pounds of cotton picked as compared with last season's rate at $2.10 per hundredweight.

Wage ceilings are also in effect in California and Arizona. In the former the rate is $2.25 and in the latter $2.65. Negotiations are underway in California to increase the rate of $2.65 per hundredweight.

A 9,171,000 bale cotton crop for the United States is forecast for this year by the crop reporting board of the department. This is 119,000 bales, or 1.3 percent less than the Aug. 1 forecast. Last year production totaled only 9,015,000 bales as compared with the 1935-44 average of 12,553,000 bales.

# NEGRO INCOME HALF THAT OF DIXIE WHITES

The Courier
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Sat. 8-24-46

NEW ORLEANS—The average income of a colored person in the South is half that of a Southern white man, James Dombroski, executive director of the Southern Conference of Human Welfare, emphasized here last week. He further pointed out that the annual wealth of the South would increase ten billion dollars if the per capita income of ten Southern States were raised to the national level.

Mr. Dombroski, who was in the Crescent City looking for a suitable site to establish headquarters for the organization, mentioned that the conference aims to raise the status of the South—to improve the economic and living standard of the entire area. He revealed that increased industry and fruitful agriculture are means for attaining this end.

# Police Maintains Low Wage Pattern With Death Threats

The Defender
Chicago, Ill.
Sat. 7-13-46

MEMPHIS — While Congress hesitates to pass a decent minimum wage law, Police Chief Jodie Moore of Portageville, Mo., has brooked no delay in his arbitrary ceiling on the wages of Negro cotton field hands.

After threatening to kill James Albert, a cotton chopper, if he worked for more than $3 a day and menacing M. D. Agee, who tried to hire cotton choppers at $4 per day, Chief Moore openly admitted that "I'm getting $200 a month to run this deal in this town, and I will run it."

"Overseer" Moore's boasts and threats are contained in notarized affidavits and have been sent to the state attorney general for investigation.

# King Rears White Head, But Women Are Choppers

By BILL BORING.
Constitution Staff Writer.

JEFFERSONVILLE, June 11—A lazy wind lazily carried their singing to the highway and dropped it there—

"Mother's chillun have a hard time when mother's gone;

"Have no where to go but wander from do' to do' when mother's gone . . ."

There was something of the Old South in their voices. There were pillared mansions and brown colts romping in the pastures. There were plantation ladies and magnolias. Listen to the song of the cotton rows—

"O Lawdy I'se tramping, tramping—trying to make heaven my home . . ."

There were clay-colored roads and honeysuckles. There were cabins in the cotton and weeping at the slave block—

"Honey, don't you cry; honey, don't you cry—honey, don't you cry no mo'."

The singing hushed with the approach of strangers.

"What's them white folks want?"

The darkies are chopping cotton again here in the cotton belt—"choppin' dat cotton from sun-up till sun-down, trying to get it out of the grass."

Here in this field there were plenty of choppers, but most fields are suffering. That's because the farmers can't pay more than $2.25 a day to get their cotton chopped. So the men folks aren't chopping cotton any more. Only the women and children.

# Cotton Patch Choppers Ask $5 10-Hr. Day

A demand for $5 per day fo chopping cotton has been raise by the National Farm Labor Union it was revealed in Memphis today

H. L. Mitchell, president of th union, announced that 50,000 cir culars bearing the union's deman for $5 for 10 hours work, were dis tributed in the plantation areas o Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, anc Alabama by Monday, June 3rd.

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The circulars stated that, "There is a shortage of labor on the farms Now is the time to get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work." Notice was also given that any farmer wanting to hire labor at the union wage rate of $5 a day, would be supplied with good workers.

# Banana Workers in Costa Rica Demand Better Pay

By HAROLD PREECE

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA —Because colored banana workers on the Caribbean Coast are demanding better wages and decent working conditions, trouble is blowing up like a tropical typhoon, according to a Confederation of Latin American Labor bulletin.

These workers of the Caribbean Countries are making their demands to the Wall Street-controlled United Fruit Company. Samuel Zemurray of Boston, company president once served as a member of the President's Fair Employment Practices Committee.

Labor conditions on the banana plantations of the United Fruit Company here have been exposed by the Costa Rican Federation of Labor (CTCR) in a factual account published as an open letter to United Fruit general manager E. H. Hamer.

**Working Conditions**

CTCR discloses that United Fruit:

Pays lower salaries, charges exhorbitant prices in its controlled stores, crowds in workers where housing is not available, uses blacklists, fires workers arbitrarily, uses a contracting system similar to "blackbirding."

Refuses adeyuate medical treatment for employees, cheats in its company lunchrooms and has arbitrary wage classifications.

Company spielers are sent out to lure workers to the banana plantations. They crowd in with their families, but find no place to stay and no transportation to get back, finally becoming so desperate they will work at any wage.

**Submitted for Arbitration**

The CTCR warned in its letter that strike action "will be inevitable if our just complaints and demands are not settled." The case has been submitted to the government board of arbitration.

As an example of high prices in United Fruid controlled stores, the only ones available to workers, it is said a pound of butter sells for $1.08, coffee at 40 cents a pound, eggs at about 90 cents a dozen and a can of evaporated milk about 20 cents.

Workers on the company-owned railway, whose wage scale is comparatively high, were paid averages as low as $65 a month. Maximum wages were listed at about $90 per month, compared with $175 a month on non-company railways.